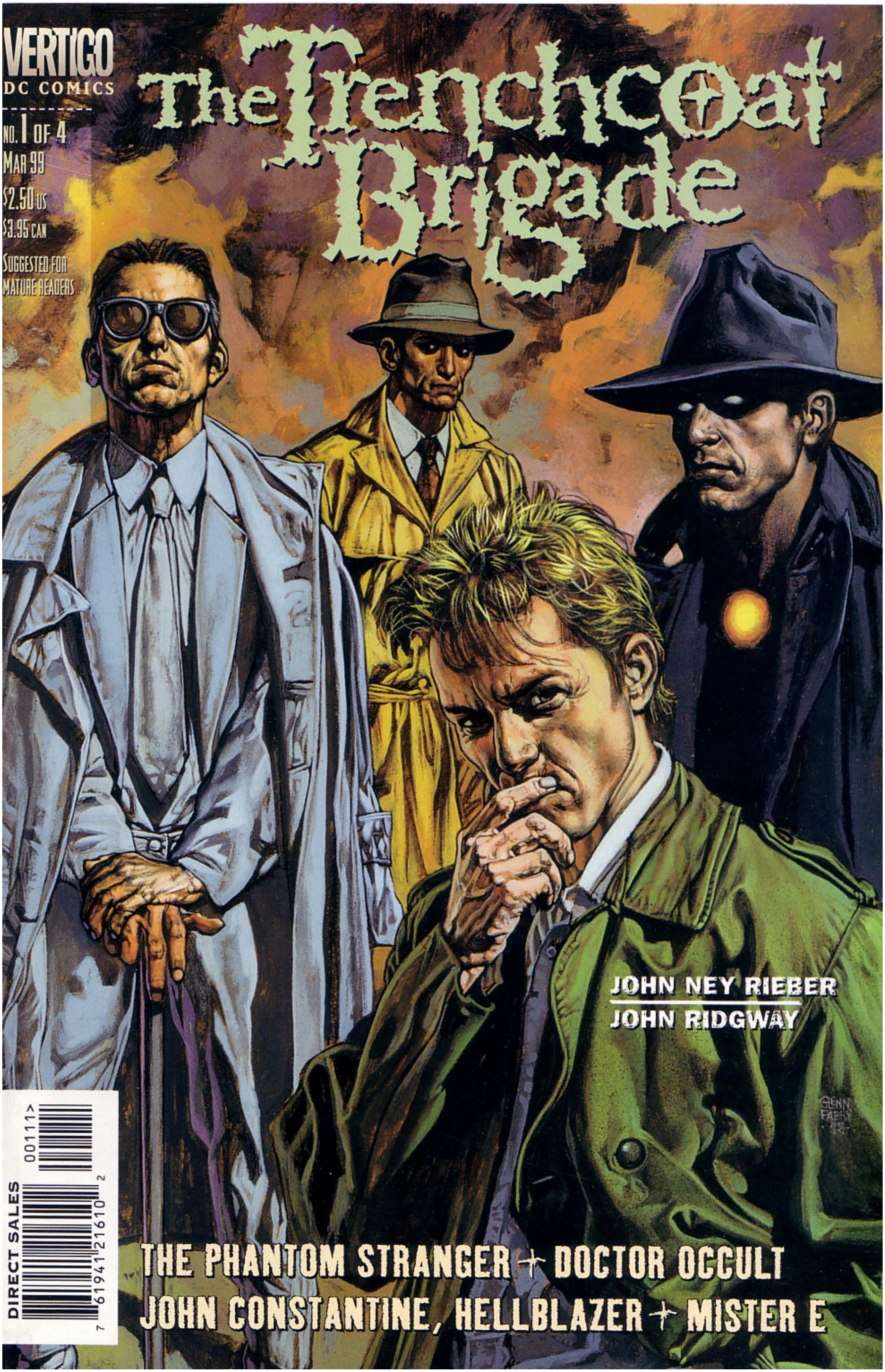

The Trenchcoat Brigade

VERTIGO
DC COMICS

NO. 1 OF 4
MAR 99
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THE PHANTOM STRANGER + DOCTOR OCCULT
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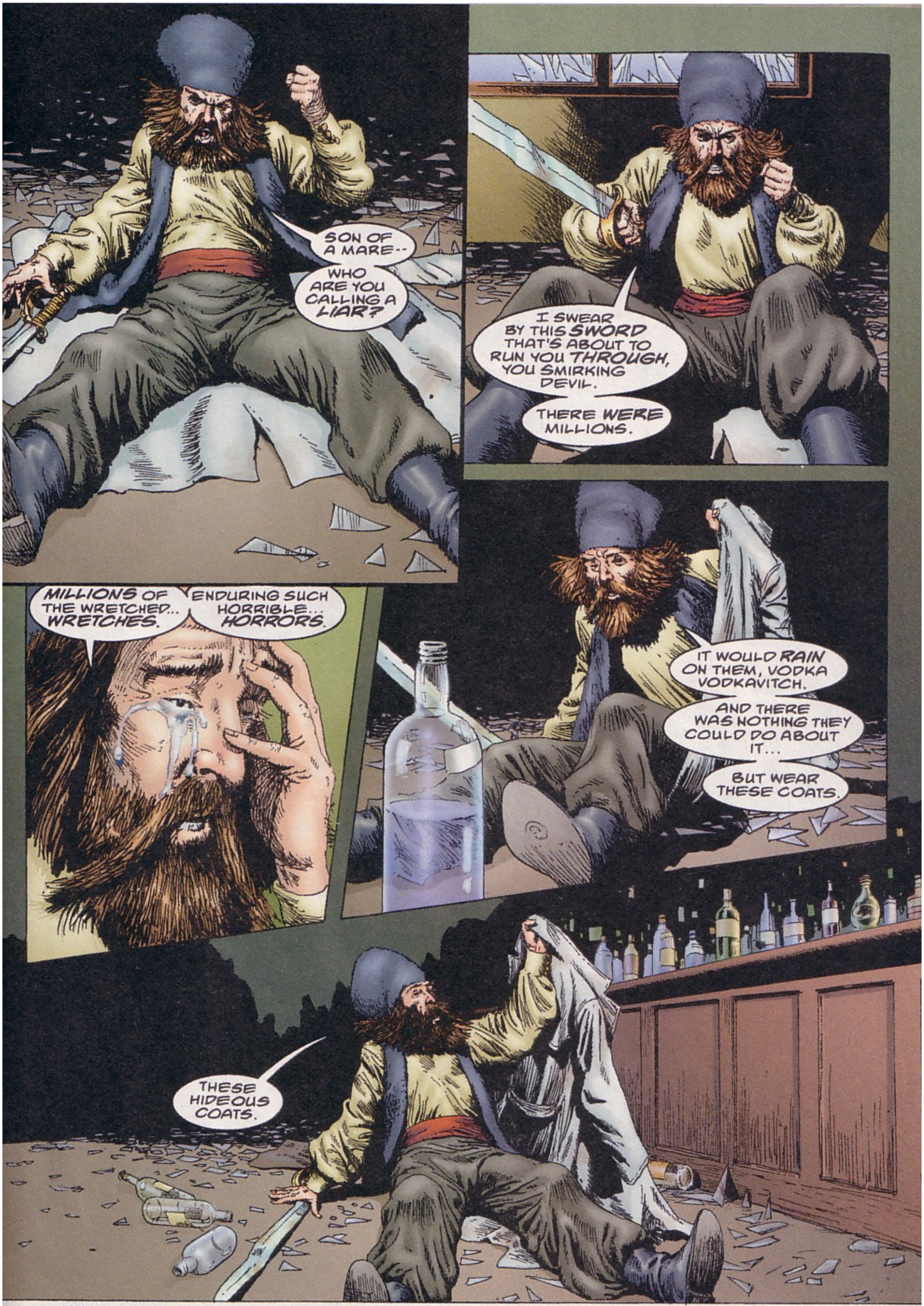
SON OF A MARE-- WHO ARE YOU CALLING A *LIAR?*
I SWEAR BY THIS **SWORD** THAT'S ABOUT TO RUN YOU *THROUGH,* YOU SMIRKING DEVIL.
THERE *WERE* MILLIONS.
MILLIONS OF THE WRETCHED... *WRETCHES.*
ENDURING SUCH HORRIBLE... *HORRORS.*
IT WOULD *RAIN* ON THEM, VODKA VODKAVITCH.
AND THERE WAS NOTHING THEY COULD DO ABOUT IT...
BUT WEAR THESE COATS.
THESE HIDEOUS COATS.

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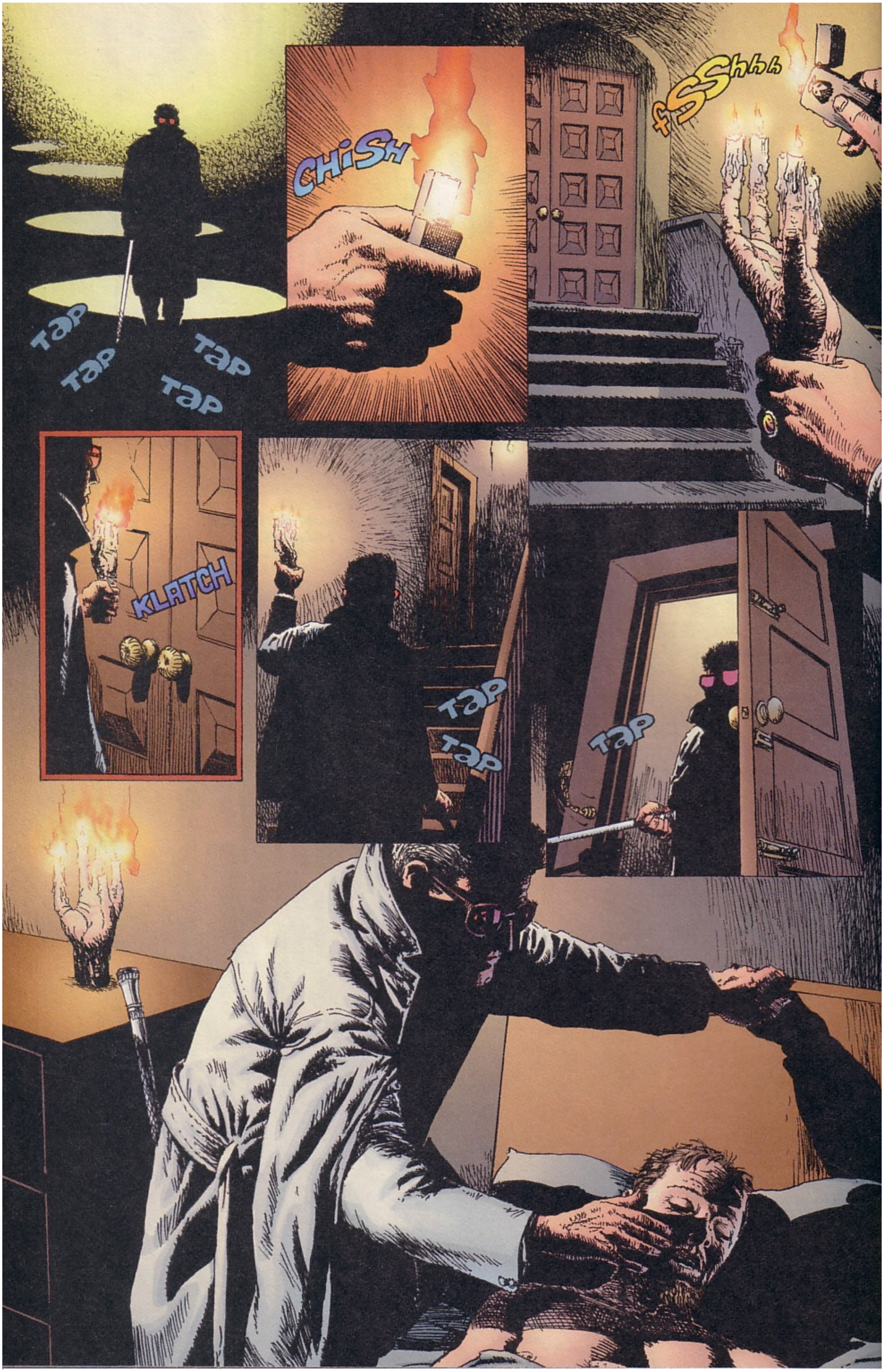
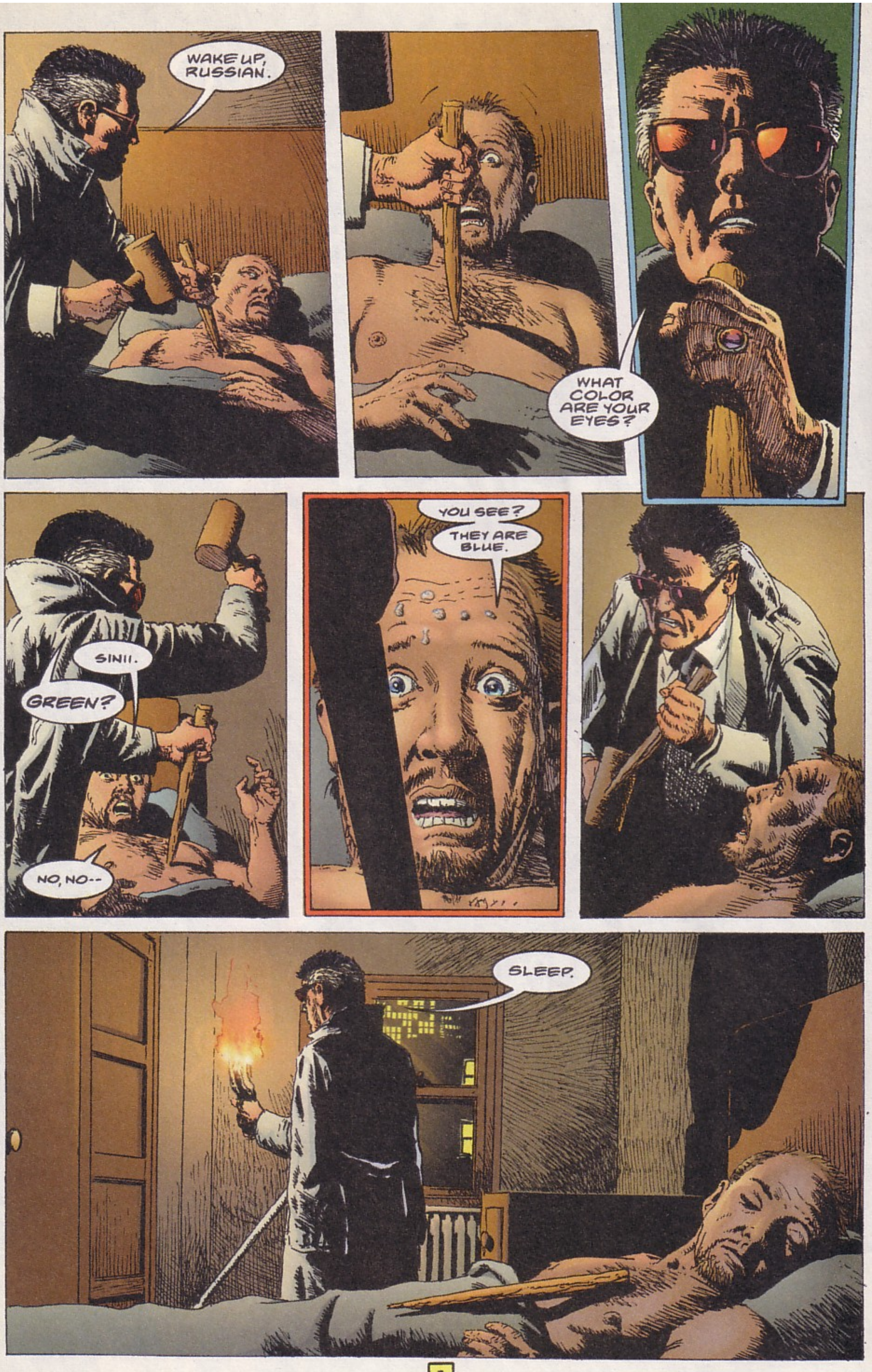
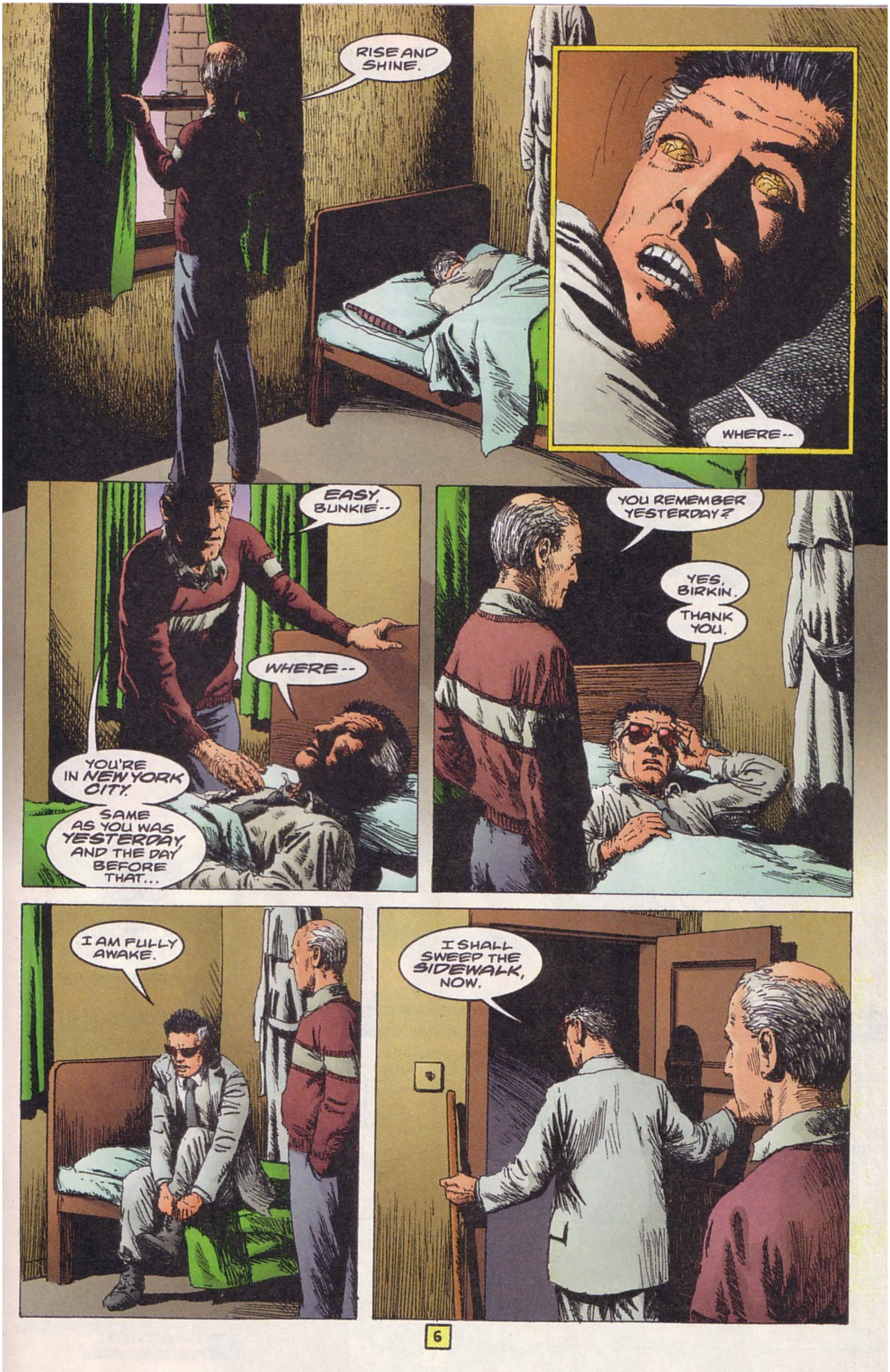
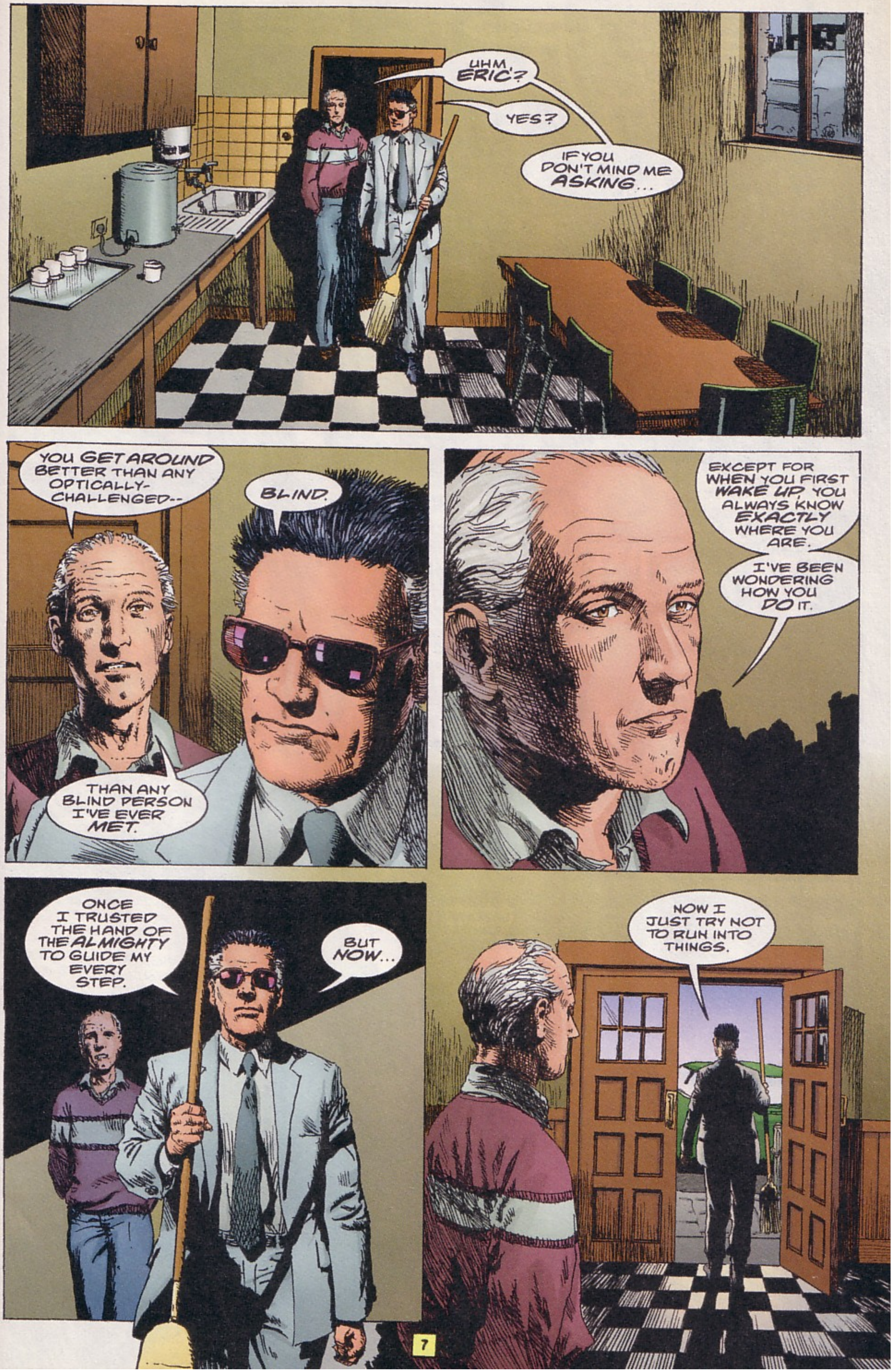
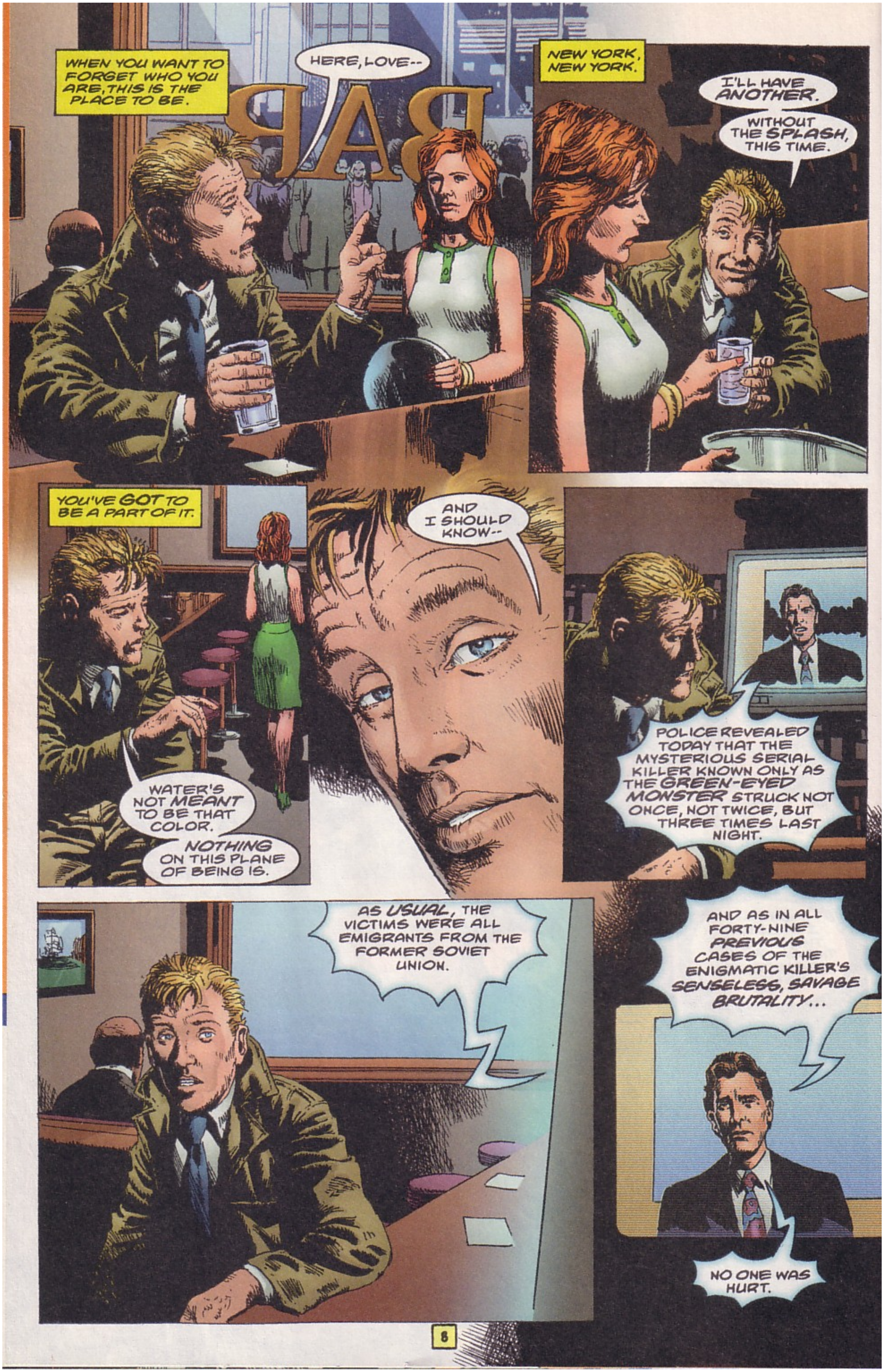
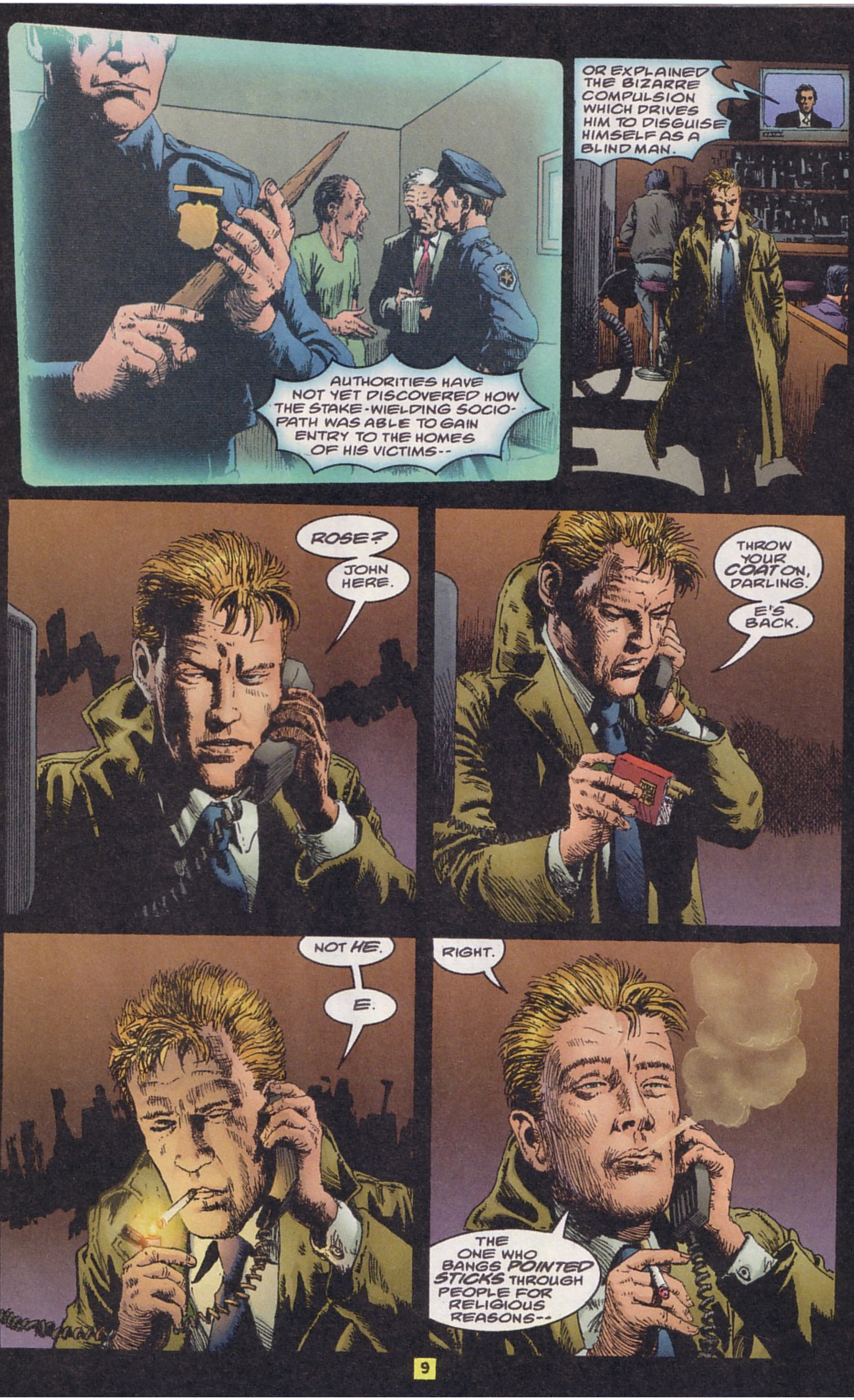

TAP
TAP
TAP
TAP
CHISH
fSShhh
KLATCH
TAP
TAP
TAP

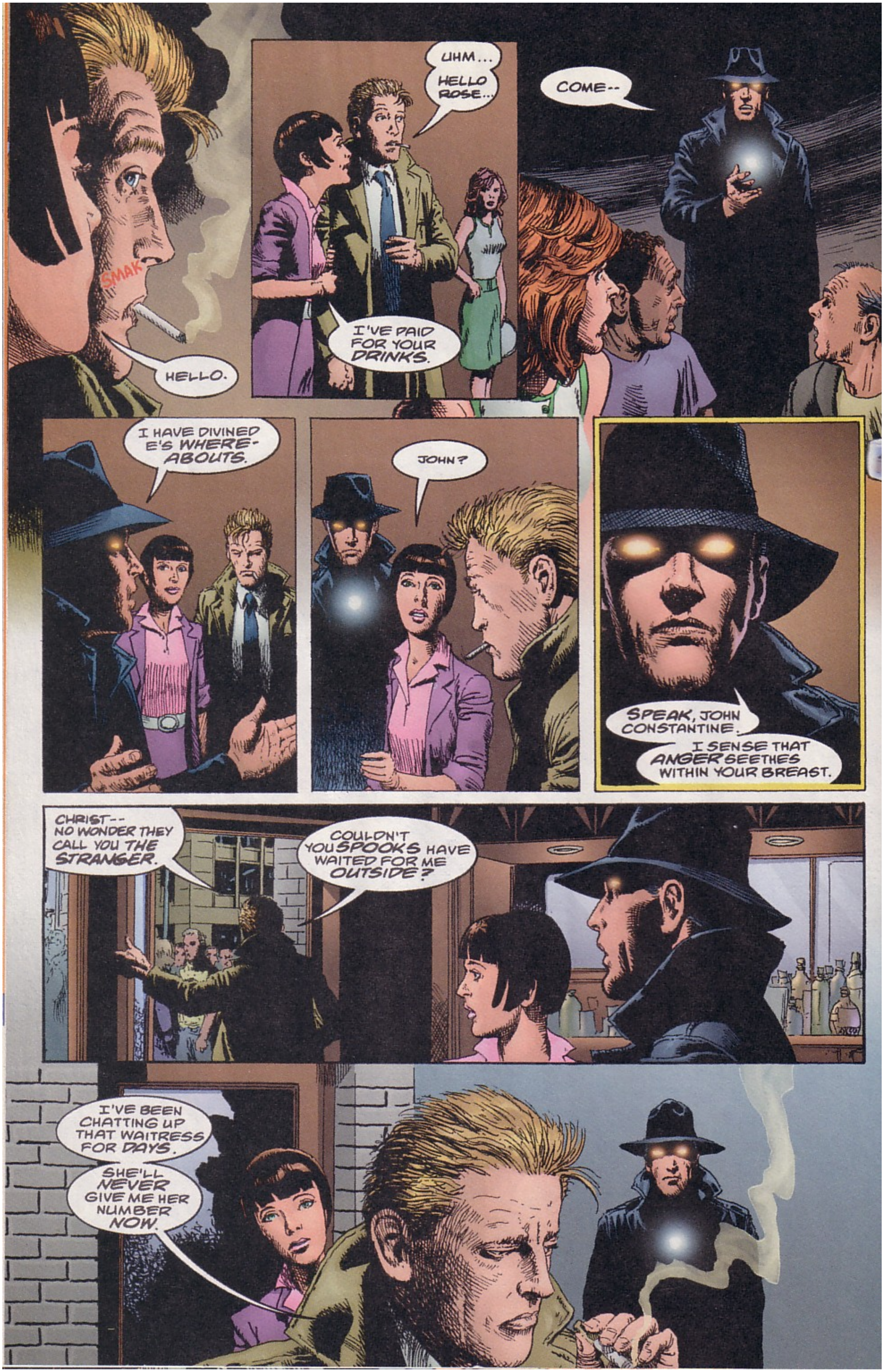

WAKE UP, RUSSIAN.
WHAT COLOR ARE YOUR EYES?
SINII.
GREEN?
NO, NO--
YOU SEE?
THEY ARE BLUE.
SLEEP.

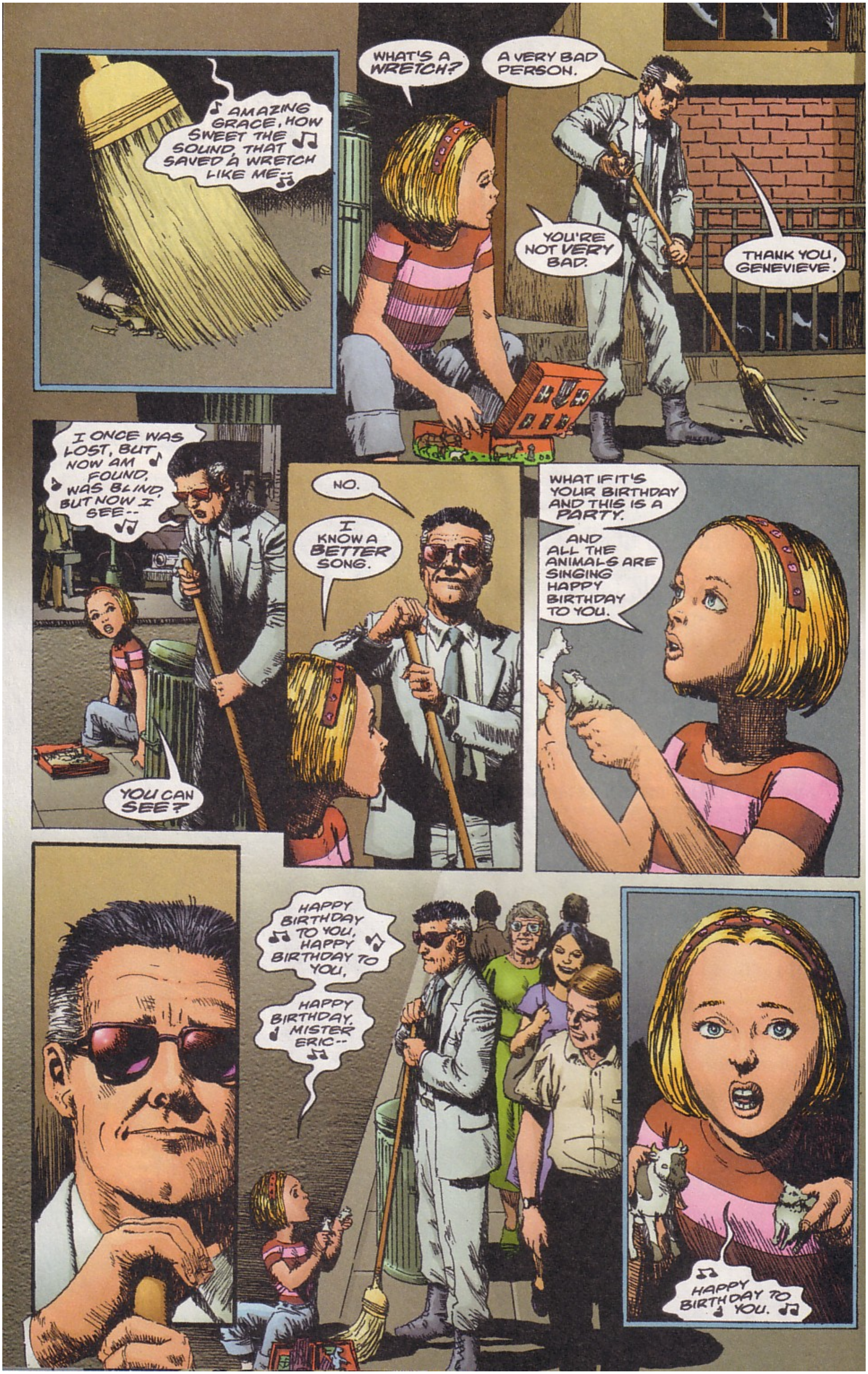

RISE AND SHINE.
WHERE--
EASY, BUNKIE--
WHERE--
YOU'RE IN *NEW YORK CITY*.
SAME AS YOU WAS *YESTERDAY*, AND THE DAY BEFORE THAT...
YOU REMEMBER YESTERDAY?
YES, BIRKIN.
THANK YOU.
I AM FULLY AWAKE.
I SHALL SWEEP THE *SIDEWALK*, NOW.

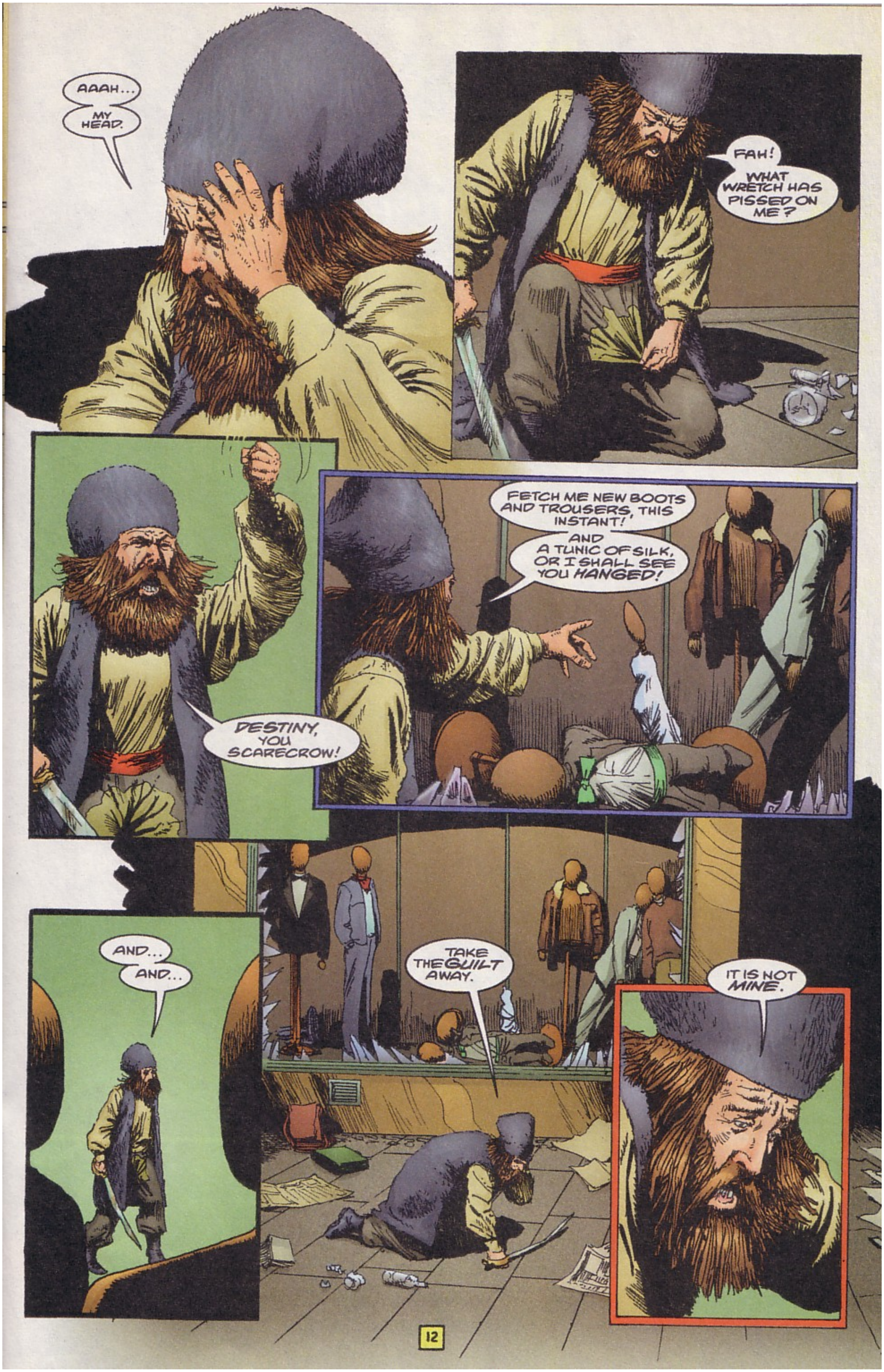

UHM, ERIC?
YES?
IF YOU DON'T MIND ME ASKING...
YOU GET AROUND BETTER THAN ANY OPTICALLY-CHALLENGED--
BLIND.
THAN ANY BLIND PERSON I'VE EVER MET.
EXCEPT FOR WHEN YOU FIRST WAKE UP, YOU ALWAYS KNOW EXACTLY WHERE YOU ARE.
I'VE BEEN WONDERING HOW YOU DO IT.
ONCE I TRUSTED THE HAND OF THE ALMIGHTY TO GUIDE MY EVERY STEP.
BUT NOW...
NOW I JUST TRY NOT TO RUN INTO THINGS.

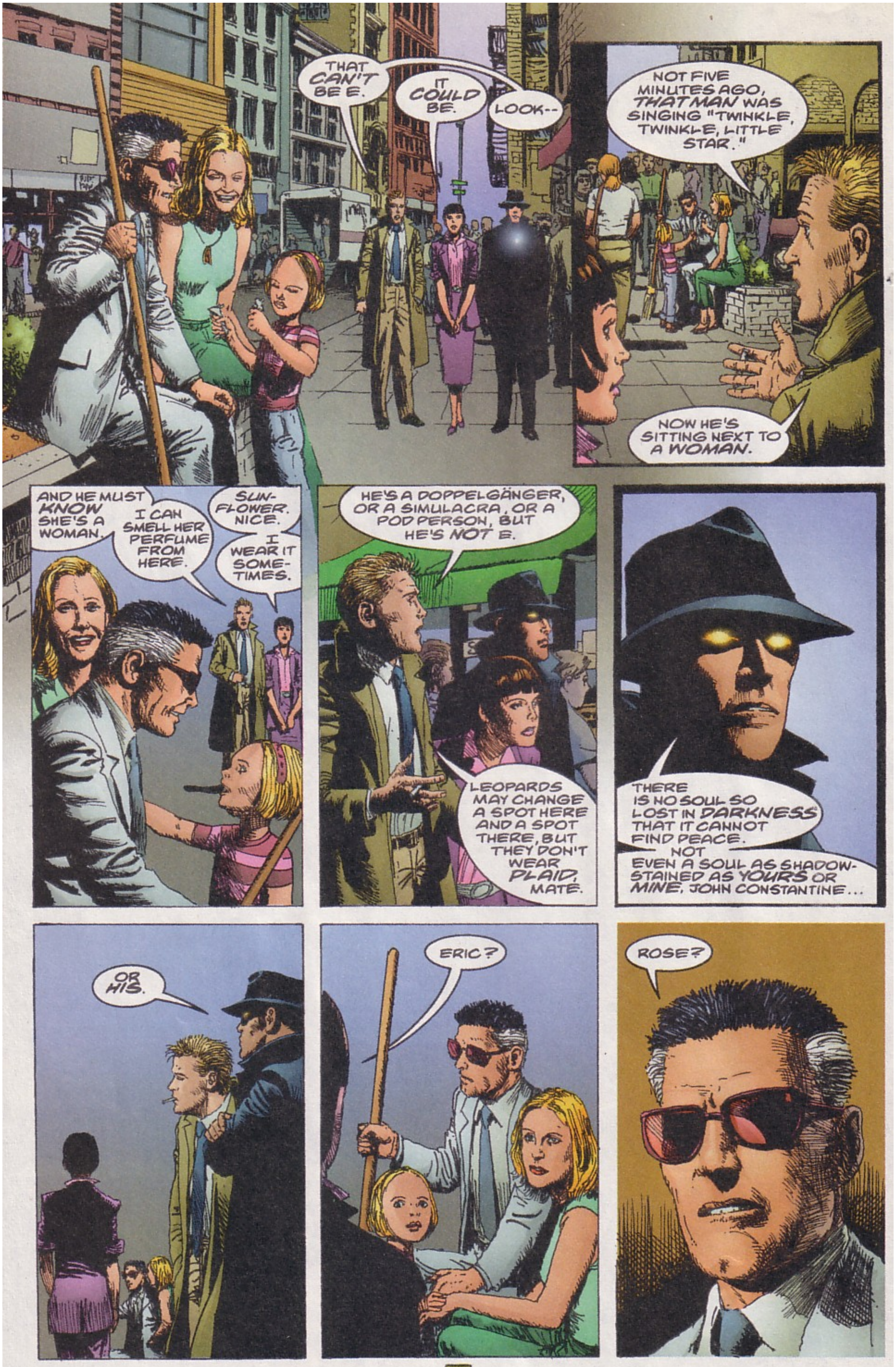

WHEN YOU WANT TO FORGET WHO YOU ARE, THIS IS THE PLACE TO BE.
HERE, LOVE--
BAR
NEW YORK, NEW YORK.
I'LL HAVE ANOTHER. WITHOUT THE SPLASH, THIS TIME.
YOU'VE GOT TO BE A PART OF IT.
WATER'S NOT MEANT TO BE THAT COLOR. NOTHING ON THIS PLANE OF BEING IS.
AND I SHOULD KNOW--
POLICE REVEALED TODAY THAT THE MYSTERIOUS SERIAL KILLER KNOWN ONLY AS THE GREEN-EYED MONSTER STRUCK NOT ONCE, NOT TWICE, BUT THREE TIMES LAST NIGHT.
AS USUAL, THE VICTIMS WERE ALL EMIGRANTS FROM THE FORMER SOVIET UNION.
AND AS IN ALL FORTY-NINE PREVIOUS CASES OF THE ENIGMATIC KILLER'S SENSELESS, SAVAGE BRUTALITY...
NO ONE WAS HURT.

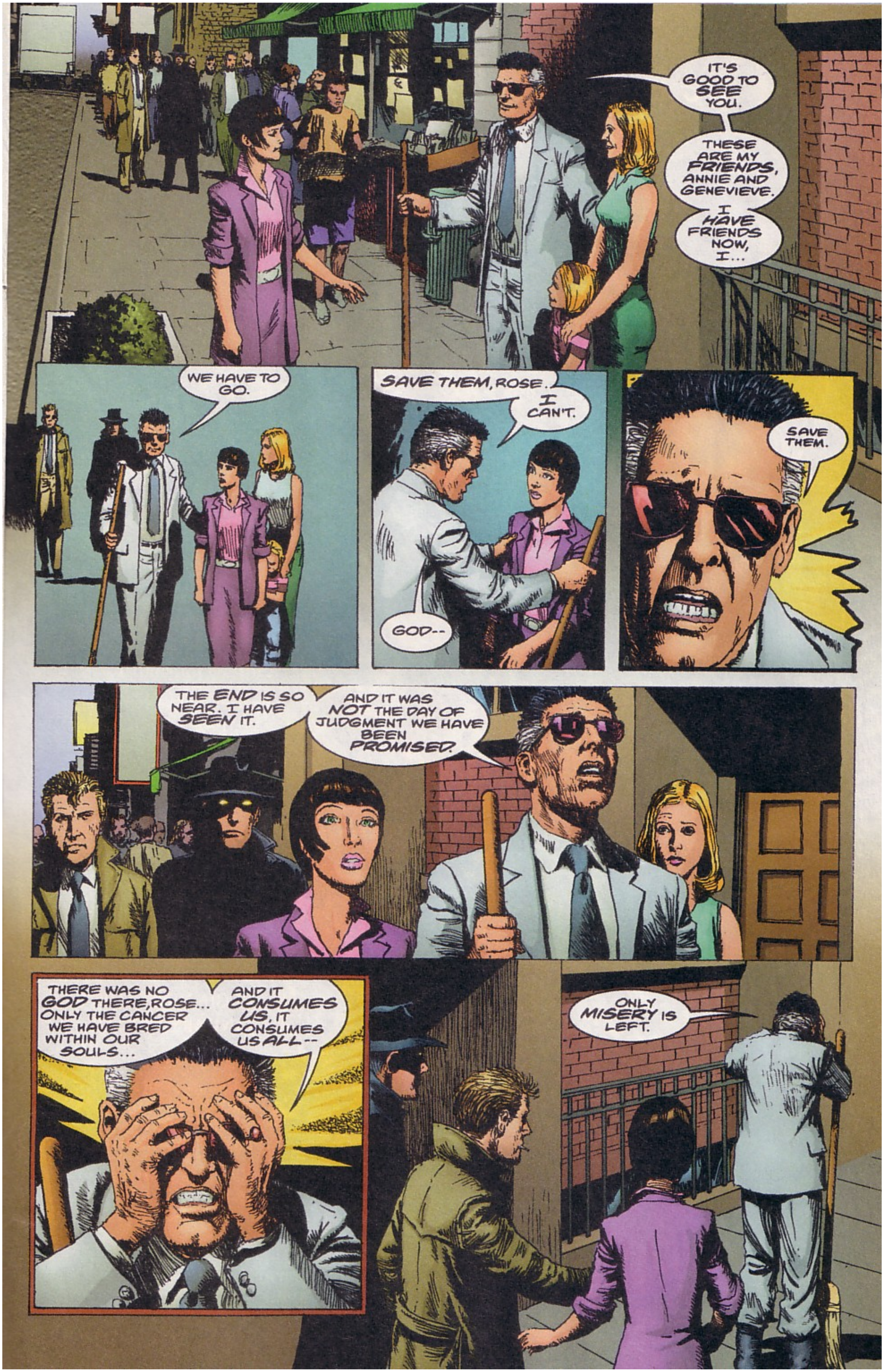

AUTHORITIES HAVE NOT YET DISCOVERED HOW THE STAKE-WIELDING SOCIOPATH WAS ABLE TO GAIN ENTRY TO THE HOMES OF HIS VICTIMS--
OR EXPLAINED THE BIZARRE COMPULSION WHICH DRIVES HIM TO DISGUISE HIMSELF AS A BLIND MAN.
ROSE?
JOHN HERE.
THROW YOUR COAT ON, DARLING.
E'S BACK.
NOT HE.
E.
RIGHT.
THE ONE WHO BANGS POINTED STICKS THROUGH PEOPLE FOR RELIGIOUS REASONS--

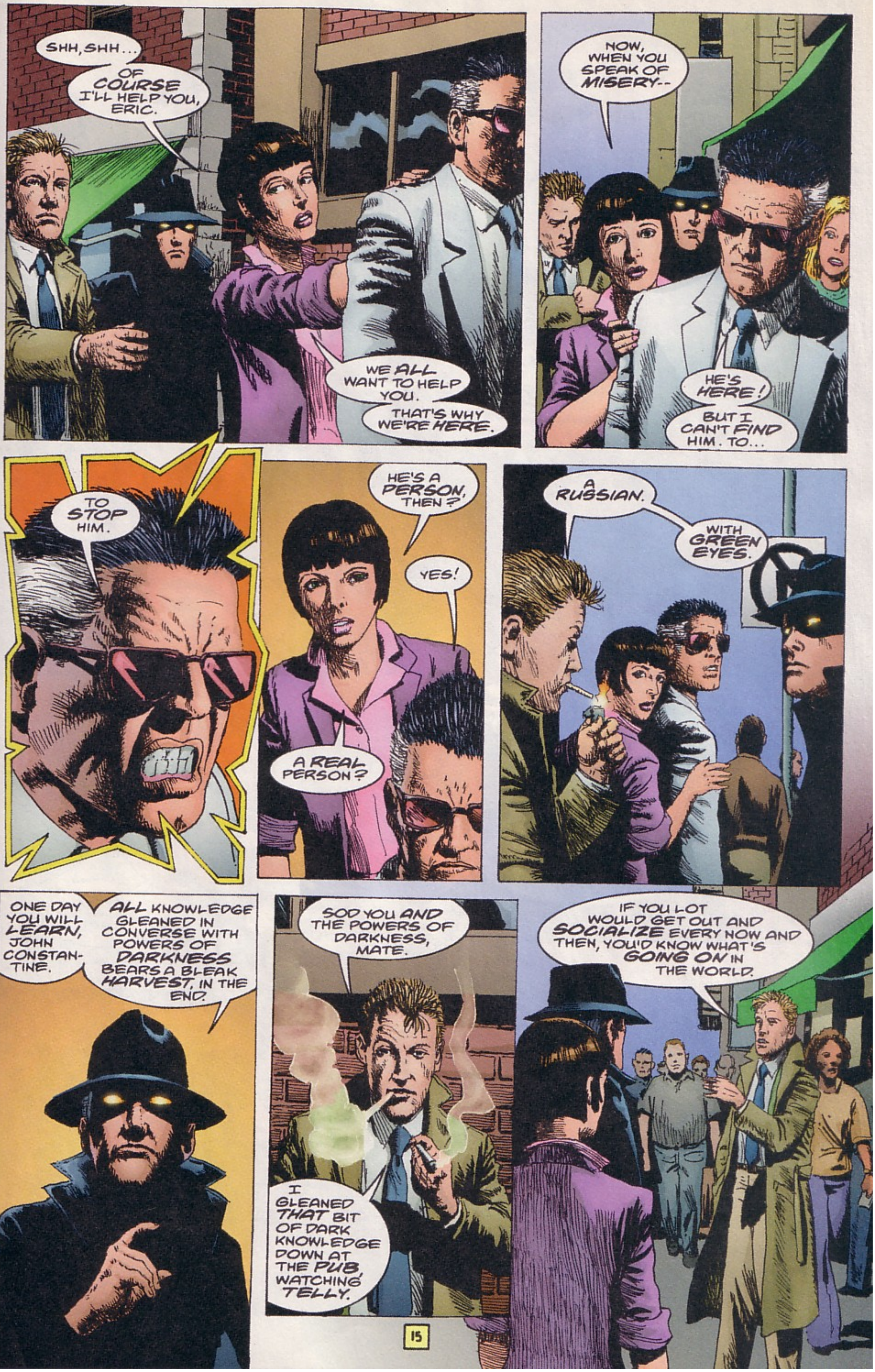

SMAK
HELLO.
UHM... HELLO ROSE...
I'VE PAID FOR YOUR DRINKS.
COME--
I HAVE DIVINED E'S WHEREABOUTS.
JOHN?
SPEAK, JOHN CONSTANTINE.
I SENSE THAT ANGER SEETHES WITHIN YOUR BREAST.
CHRIST-- NO WONDER THEY CALL YOU THE STRANGER.
COULDN'T YOU SPOOKS HAVE WAITED FOR ME OUTSIDE?
I'VE BEEN CHATTING UP THAT WAITRESS FOR DAYS.
SHE'LL NEVER GIVE ME HER NUMBER NOW.

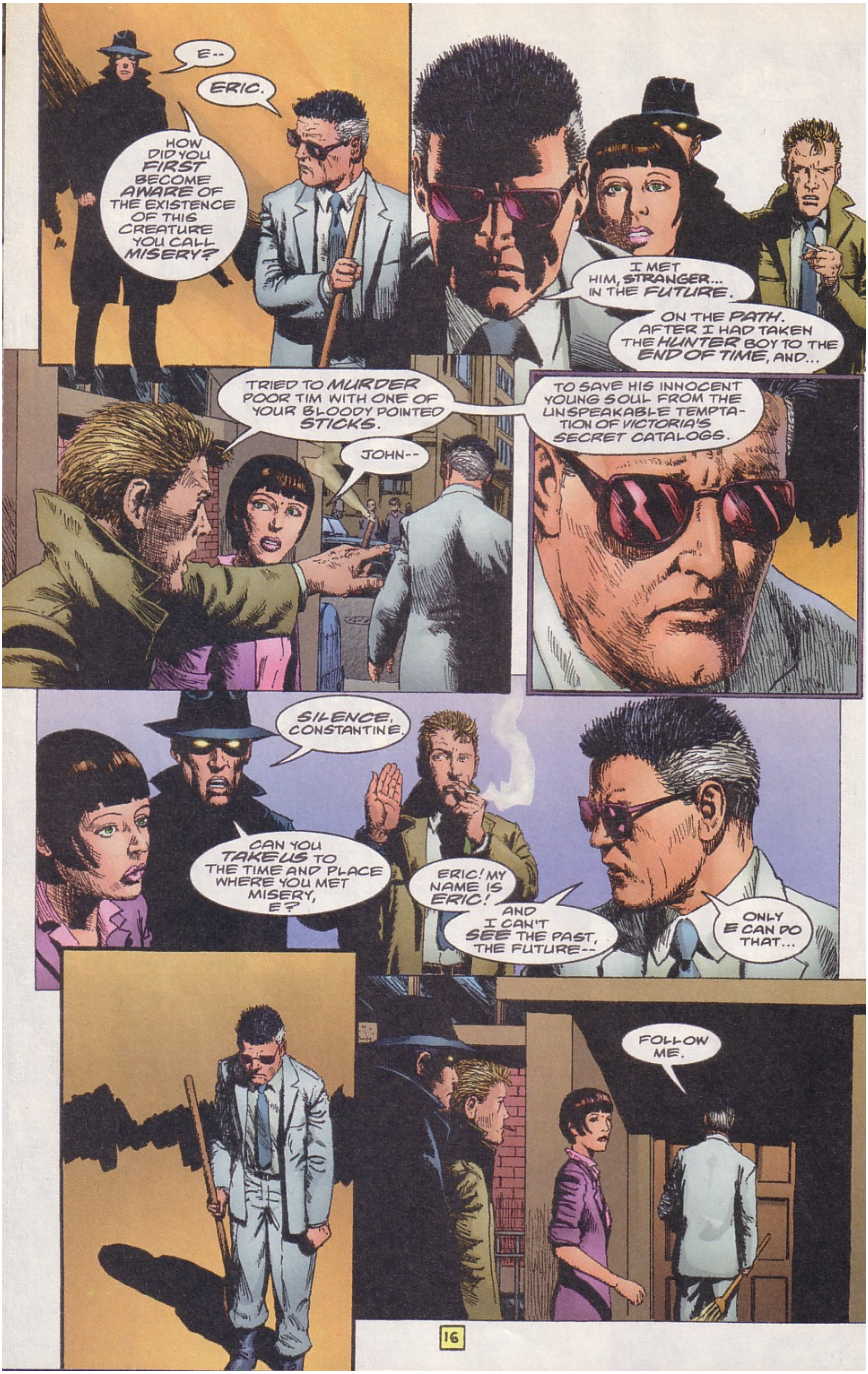

♪ AMAZING GRACE, HOW SWEET THE SOUND, ♫ THAT SAVED A WRETCH LIKE ME-- ♫
WHAT'S A WRETCH?
A VERY BAD PERSON.
YOU'RE NOT VERY BAD.
THANK YOU, GENEVIEVE.
I ONCE WAS LOST, BUT NOW AM FOUND, ♪ WAS BLIND, BUT NOW I SEE-- ♫
YOU CAN SEE?
NO.
I KNOW A BETTER SONG.
WHAT IF IT'S YOUR BIRTHDAY AND THIS IS A PARTY.
AND ALL THE ANIMALS ARE SINGING HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU.
HAPPY BIRTHDAY ♫ TO YOU, HAPPY ♪ BIRTHDAY TO YOU,
HAPPY BIRTHDAY, ♪ MISTER ERIC-- ♫
♫ HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO ♪ YOU. ♫

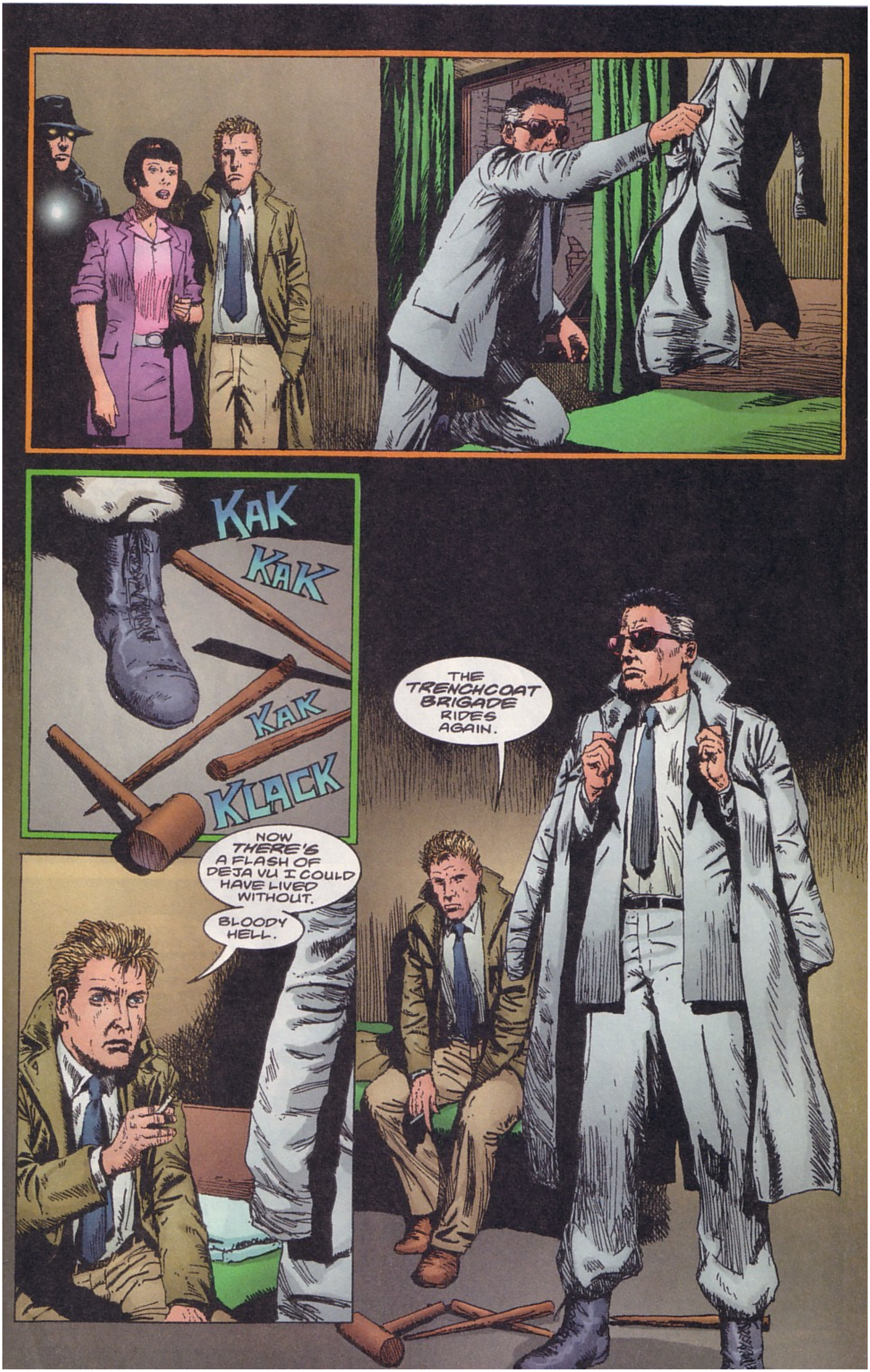

AAAH...
MY HEAD.
FAH!
WHAT WRETCH HAS PISSED ON ME?
DESTINY, YOU SCARECROW!
FETCH ME NEW BOOTS AND TROUSERS, THIS INSTANT!
AND A TUNIC OF SILK, OR I SHALL SEE YOU HANGED!
AND...
AND...
TAKE THE GUILT AWAY.
IT IS NOT MINE.

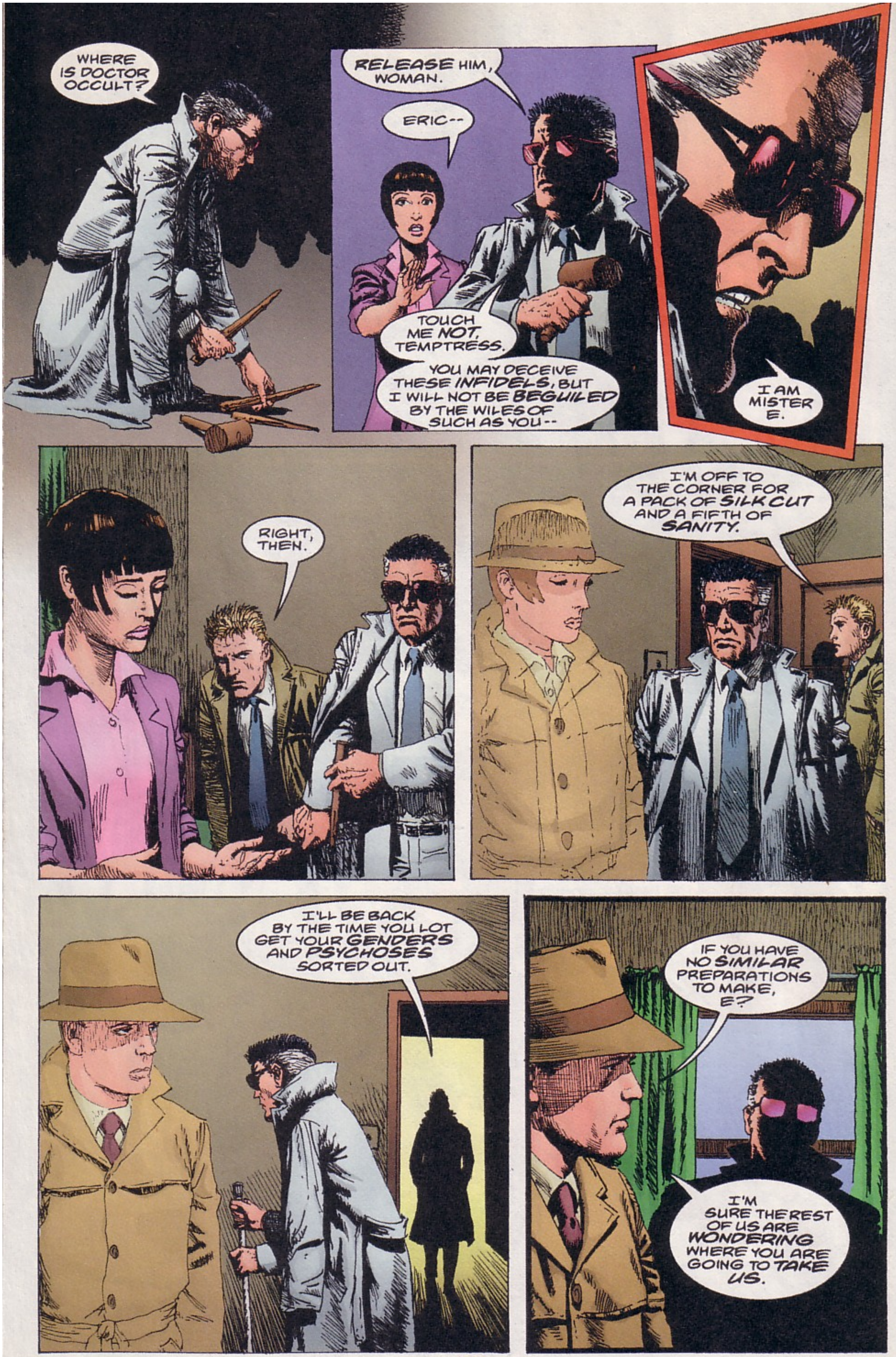

THAT CAN'T BE E.
IT COULD BE.
LOOK--
NOT FIVE MINUTES AGO, THAT MAN WAS SINGING "TWINKLE, TWINKLE, LITTLE STAR."
NOW HE'S SITTING NEXT TO A WOMAN.
AND HE MUST KNOW SHE'S A WOMAN.
I CAN SMELL HER PERFUME FROM HERE.
SUNFLOWER. NICE.
I WEAR IT SOMETIMES.
HE'S A DOPPELGÄNGER, OR A SIMULACRA, OR A POD PERSON, BUT HE'S NOT E.
LEOPARDS MAY CHANGE A SPOT HERE AND A SPOT THERE, BUT THEY DON'T WEAR PLAID, MATE.
THERE IS NO SOUL SO LOST IN DARKNESS THAT IT CANNOT FIND PEACE.
NOT EVEN A SOUL AS SHADOW-STAINED AS YOURS OR MINE, JOHN CONSTANTINE...
OR HIS.
ERIC?
ROSE?

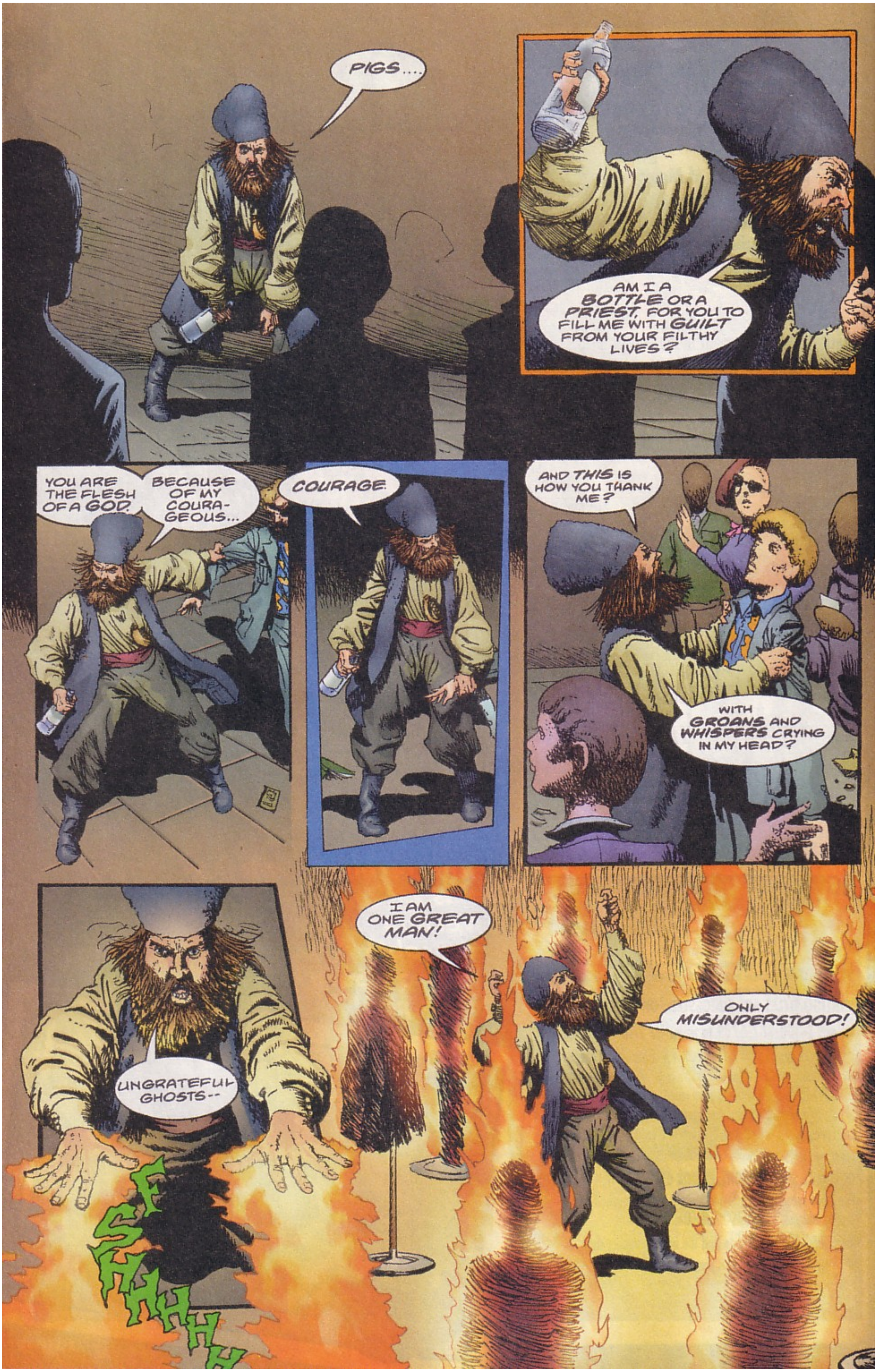

IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU.
THESE ARE MY FRIENDS, ANNIE AND GENEVIEVE.
I HAVE FRIENDS NOW, I...
WE HAVE TO GO.
SAVE THEM, ROSE.
I CAN'T.
GOD--
SAVE THEM.
THE END IS SO NEAR. I HAVE SEEN IT.
AND IT WAS NOT THE DAY OF JUDGMENT WE HAVE BEEN PROMISED.
THERE WAS NO GOD THERE, ROSE... ONLY THE CANCER WE HAVE BRED WITHIN OUR SOULS...
AND IT CONSUMES US, IT CONSUMES US ALL--
ONLY MISERY IS LEFT.

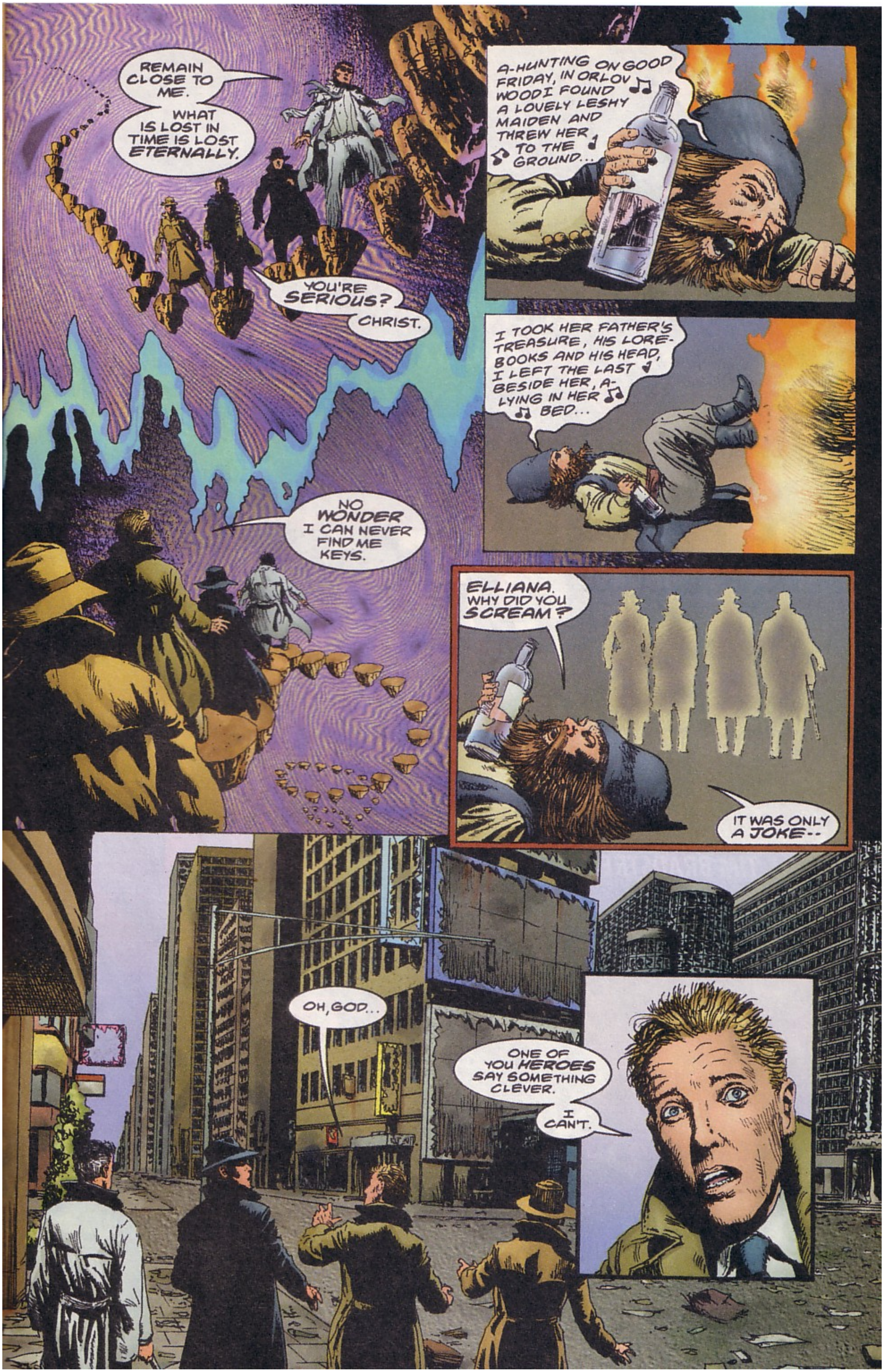

SHH, SHH...
OF COURSE I'LL HELP YOU, ERIC.
WE ALL WANT TO HELP YOU.
THAT'S WHY WE'RE HERE.
NOW, WHEN YOU SPEAK OF MISERY--
HE'S HERE!
BUT I CAN'T FIND HIM. TO...
TO STOP HIM.
HE'S A PERSON, THEN?
YES!
A REAL PERSON?
A RUSSIAN.
WITH GREEN EYES.
ONE DAY YOU WILL LEARN, JOHN CONSTANTINE.
ALL KNOWLEDGE GLEANED IN CONVERSE WITH POWERS OF DARKNESS BEARS A BLEAK HARVEST, IN THE END.
SOD YOU AND THE POWERS OF DARKNESS, MATE.
I GLEANED THAT BIT OF DARK KNOWLEDGE DOWN AT THE PUB, WATCHING TELLY.
IF YOU LOT WOULD GET OUT AND SOCIALIZE EVERY NOW AND THEN, YOU'D KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE WORLD.

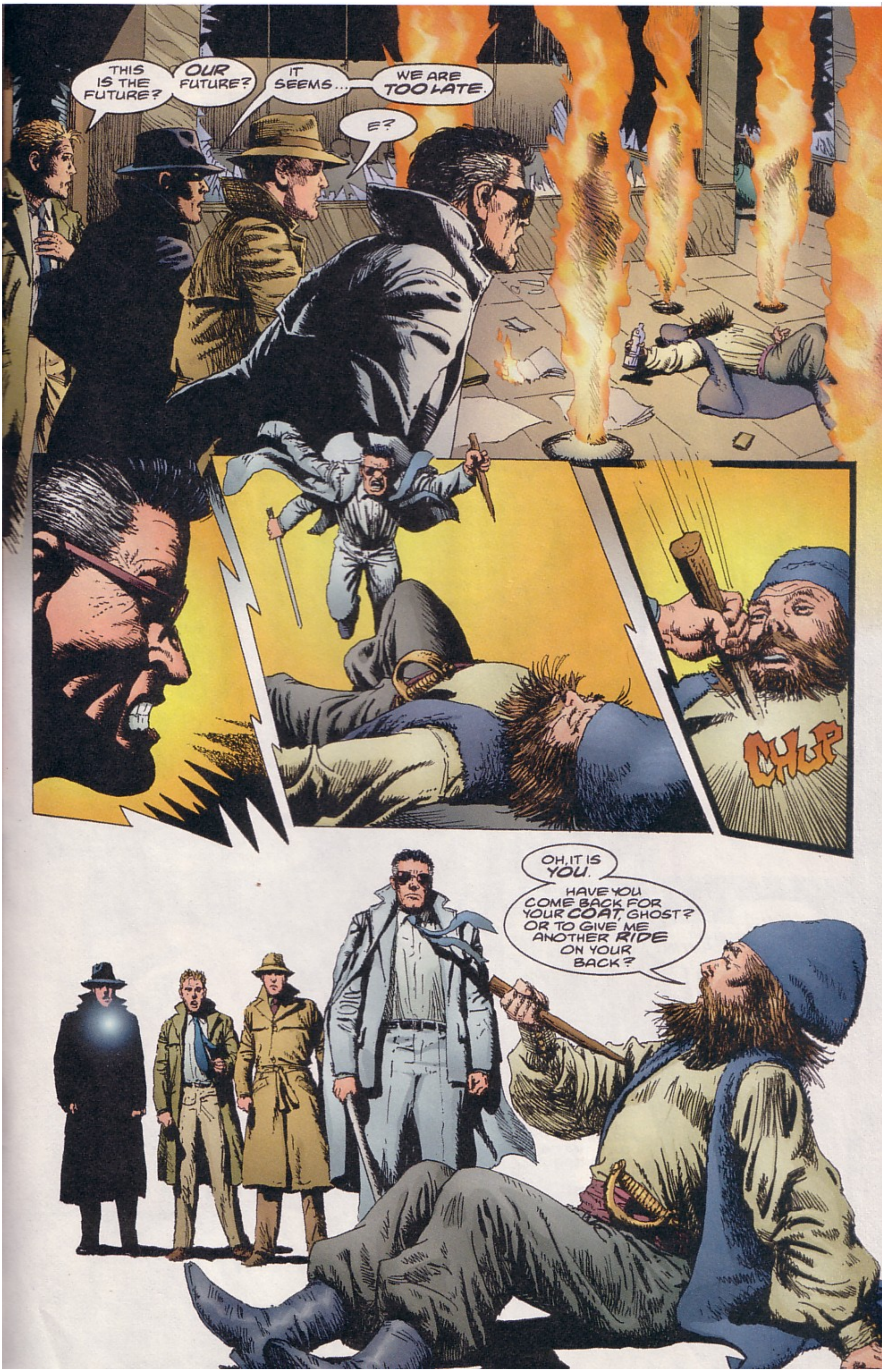

E--
ERIC.
HOW DID YOU FIRST BECOME AWARE OF THE EXISTENCE OF THIS CREATURE YOU CALL MISERY?
I MET HIM, STRANGER... IN THE FUTURE.
ON THE PATH. AFTER I HAD TAKEN THE HUNTER BOY TO THE END OF TIME, AND...
TRIED TO MURDER POOR TIM WITH ONE OF YOUR BLOODY POINTED STICKS.
JOHN--
TO SAVE HIS INNOCENT YOUNG SOUL FROM THE UNSPEAKABLE TEMPTATION OF VICTORIA'S SECRET CATALOGS.
SILENCE, CONSTANTINE.
CAN YOU TAKE US TO THE TIME AND PLACE WHERE YOU MET MISERY, E?
ERIC! MY NAME IS ERIC!
AND I CAN'T SEE THE PAST, THE FUTURE--
ONLY E CAN DO THAT...
FOLLOW ME.

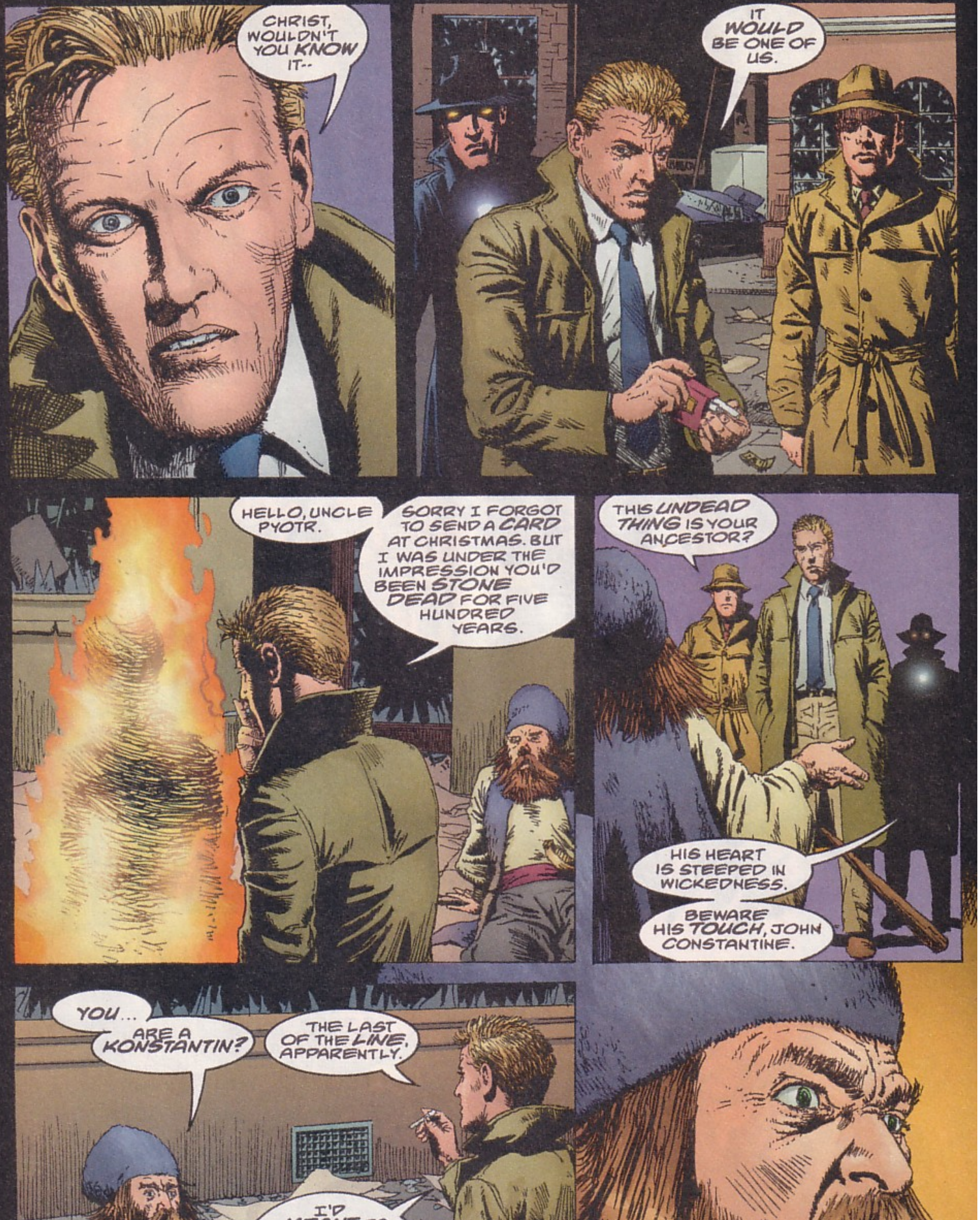

KAK
KAK
KAK
KLACK
THE TRENCHCOAT BRIGADE RIDES AGAIN.
NOW THERE'S A FLASH OF DEJA VU I COULD HAVE LIVED WITHOUT.
BLOODY HELL.

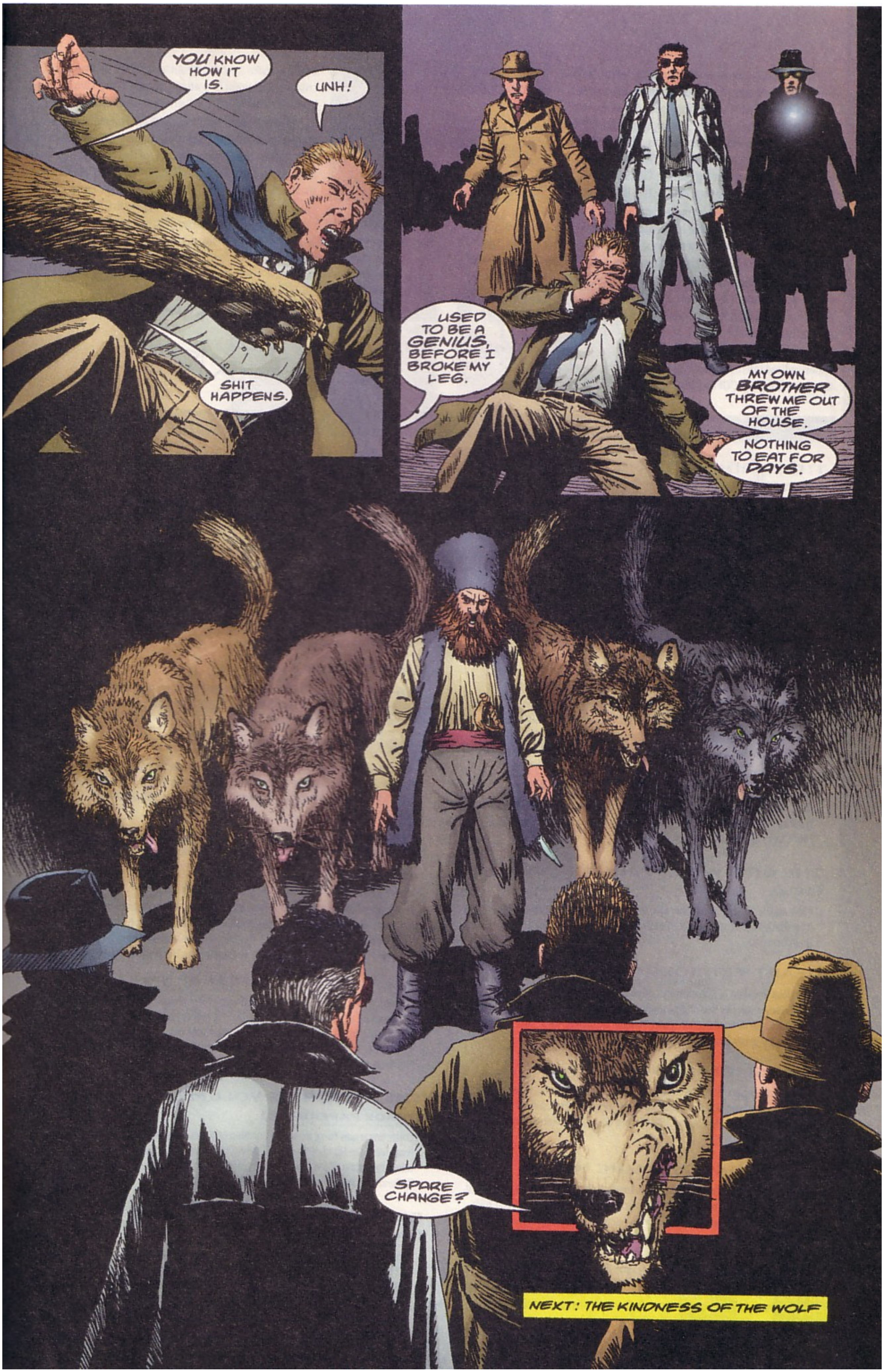

WHERE IS DOCTOR OCCULT?
RELEASE HIM, WOMAN.
ERIC--
TOUCH ME NOT, TEMPTRESS.
YOU MAY DECEIVE THESE INFIDELS, BUT I WILL NOT BE BEGUILED BY THE WILES OF SUCH AS YOU--
I AM MISTER E.
RIGHT, THEN.
I'M OFF TO THE CORNER FOR A PACK OF SILK CUT AND A FIFTH OF SANITY.
I'LL BE BACK BY THE TIME YOU LOT GET YOUR GENDERS AND PSYCHOSES SORTED OUT.
IF YOU HAVE NO SIMILAR PREPARATIONS TO MAKE, E?
I'M SURE THE REST OF US ARE WONDERING WHERE YOU ARE GOING TO TAKE US.

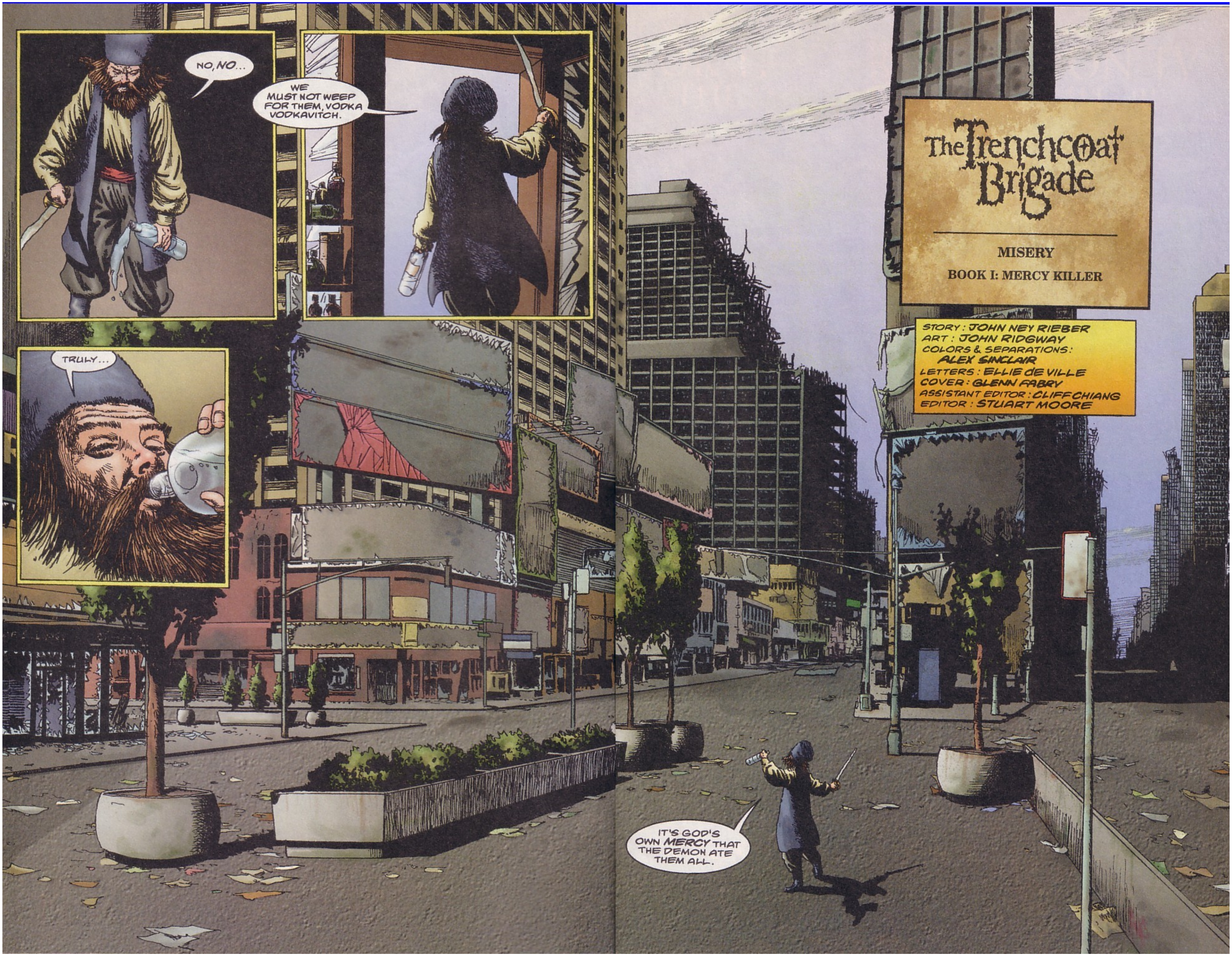

PIGS....
AM I A BOTTLE OR A PRIEST, FOR YOU TO FILL ME WITH GUILT FROM YOUR FILTHY LIVES?
YOU ARE THE FLESH OF A GOD.
BECAUSE OF MY COURAGEOUS...
COURAGE.
AND THIS IS HOW YOU THANK ME?
WITH GROANS AND WHISPERS CRYING IN MY HEAD?
UNGRATEFUL GHOSTS--
SFSHHHHH
I AM ONE GREAT MAN!
ONLY MISUNDERSTOOD!


REMAIN CLOSE TO ME.
WHAT IS LOST IN TIME IS LOST *ETERNALLY.*
YOU'RE *SERIOUS?*
CHRIST.
NO *WONDER* I CAN NEVER FIND ME KEYS.
A-HUNTING ON GOOD FRIDAY, IN ORLOV WOOD I FOUND ♫ A LOVELY LESHY MAIDEN AND THREW HER ♪ TO THE ♫ GROUND...
I TOOK HER FATHER'S TREASURE, HIS LORE-BOOKS AND HIS HEAD, I LEFT THE LAST ♪ BESIDE HER, A-LYING IN HER ♫ ♫ BED...
ELLIANA. WHY DID YOU *SCREAM?*
IT WAS ONLY A *JOKE*--
OH, GOD...
ONE OF YOU *HEROES* SAY SOMETHING CLEVER.
I CAN'T.


THIS IS THE FUTURE?
OUR FUTURE?
IT SEEMS...
WE ARE TOO LATE.
E?
CHUP
OH, IT IS YOU.
HAVE YOU COME BACK FOR YOUR COAT, GHOST? OR TO GIVE ME ANOTHER RIDE ON YOUR BACK?


CHRIST, WOULDN'T YOU *KNOW* IT--
IT *WOULD* BE ONE OF US.
HELLO, UNCLE PYOTR.
SORRY I FORGOT TO SEND A *CARD* AT CHRISTMAS. BUT I WAS UNDER THE IMPRESSION YOU'D BEEN *STONE DEAD* FOR FIVE HUNDRED YEARS.
THIS *UNDEAD THING* IS YOUR ANCESTOR?
HIS HEART IS STEEPED IN WICKEDNESS.
BEWARE HIS *TOUCH*, JOHN CONSTANTINE.
YOU... ARE A *KONSTANTIN?*
THE LAST OF THE *LINE*, APPARENTLY.
I'D *MEANT* TO SETTLE DOWN AND START A *FAMILY* TODAY, BUT THAT'S APPARENTLY--


YOU KNOW HOW IT IS.
UNH!
SHIT HAPPENS.
USED TO BE A GENIUS, BEFORE I BROKE MY LEG.
MY OWN BROTHER THREW ME OUT OF THE HOUSE.
NOTHING TO EAT FOR DAYS.
SPARE CHANGE?
NEXT: THE KINDNESS OF THE WOLF


NO, NO...
WE MUST NOT WEEP FOR THEM, VODKA VODKAVITCH.
TRULY...
IT'S GOD'S OWN MERCY THAT THE DEMON ATE THEM ALL.

The Trenchcoat Brigade

MISERY

BOOK I: MERCY KILLER

STORY : JOHN NEY RIEBER
ART : JOHN RIDGWAY
COLORS & SEPARATIONS :
ALEX SINCLAIR
LETTERS : ELLIE DE VILLE
COVER : GLENN FABRY
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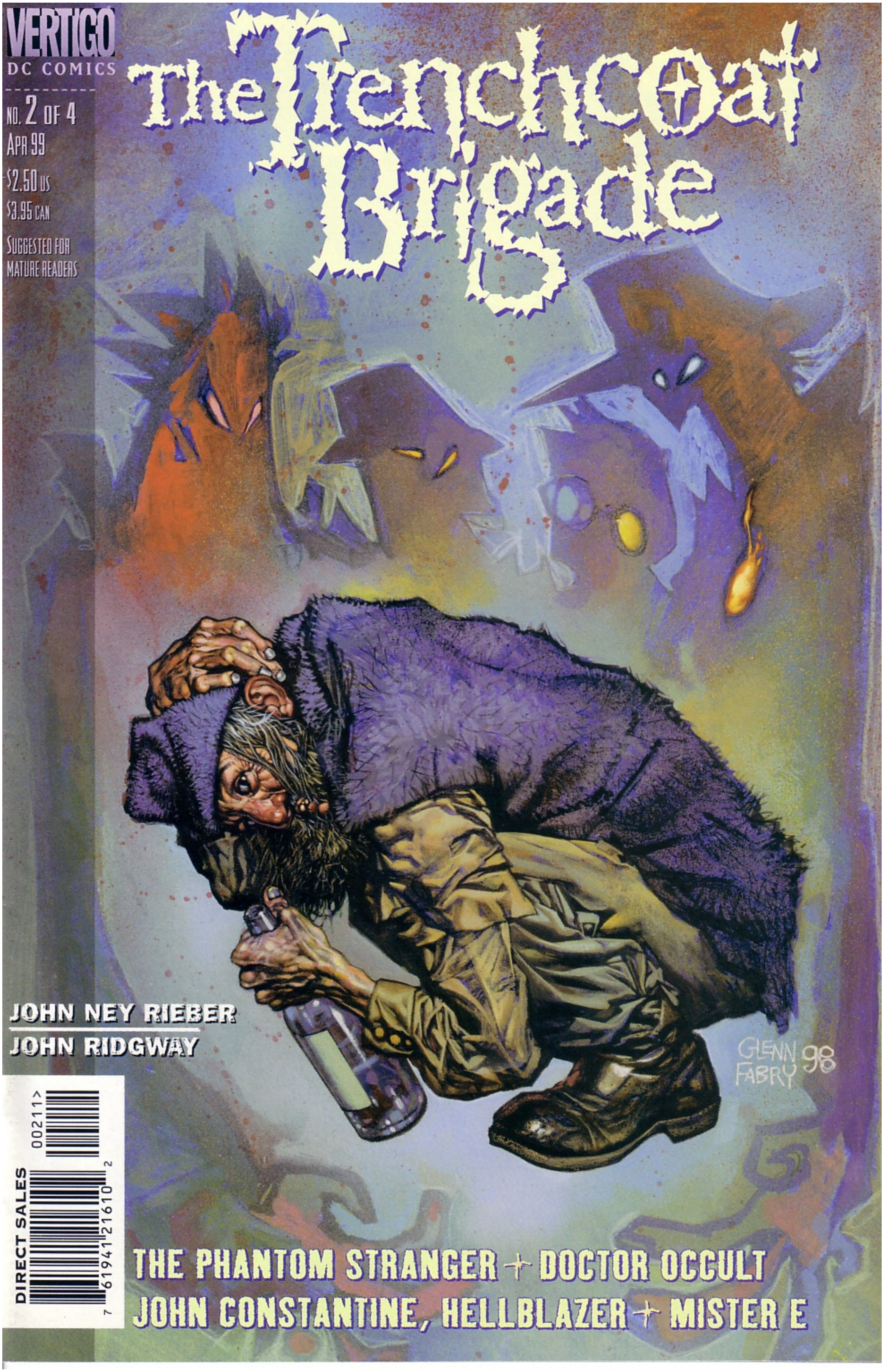

JOHN NEY RIEBER
JOHN RIDGWAY

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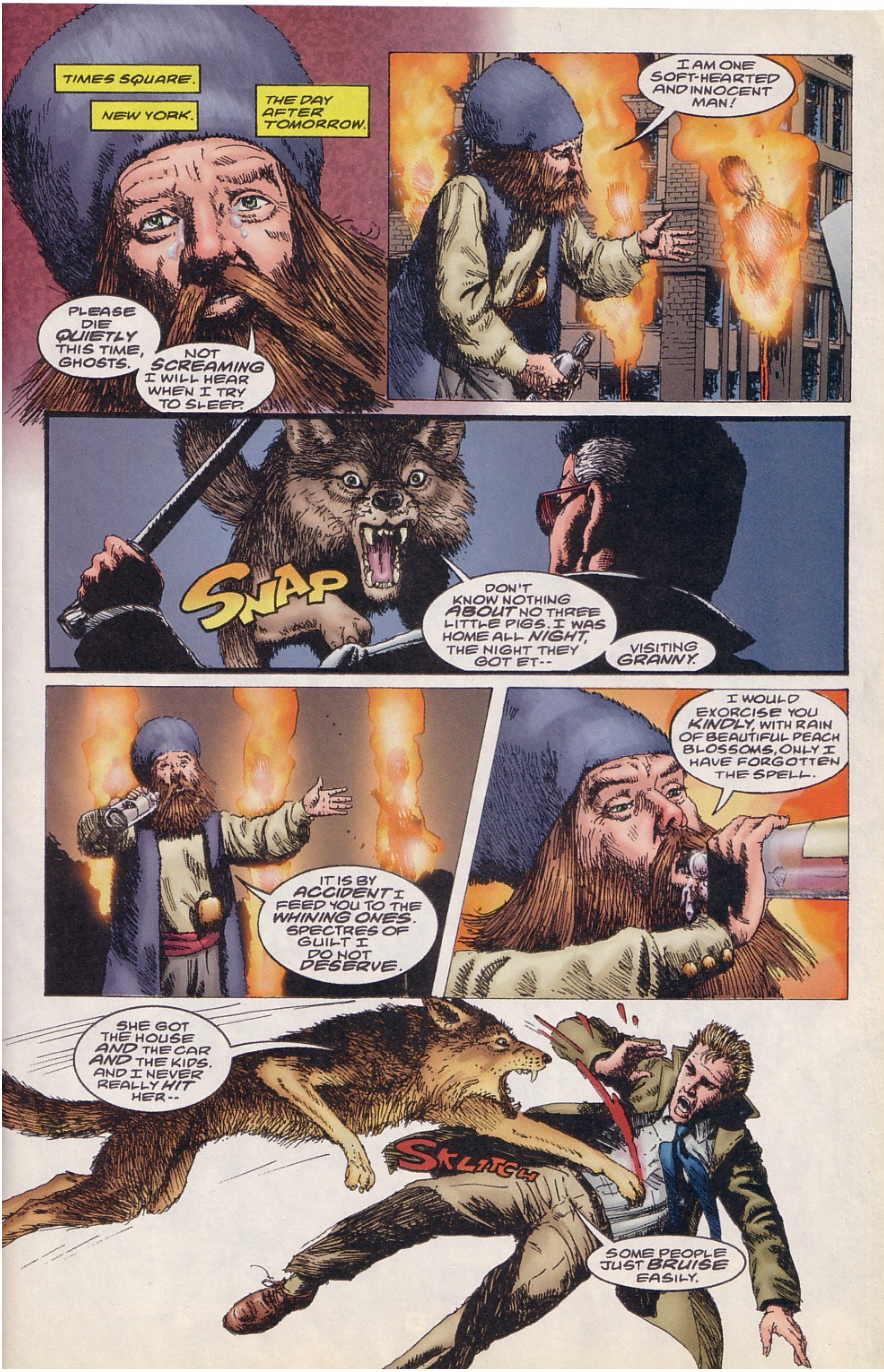
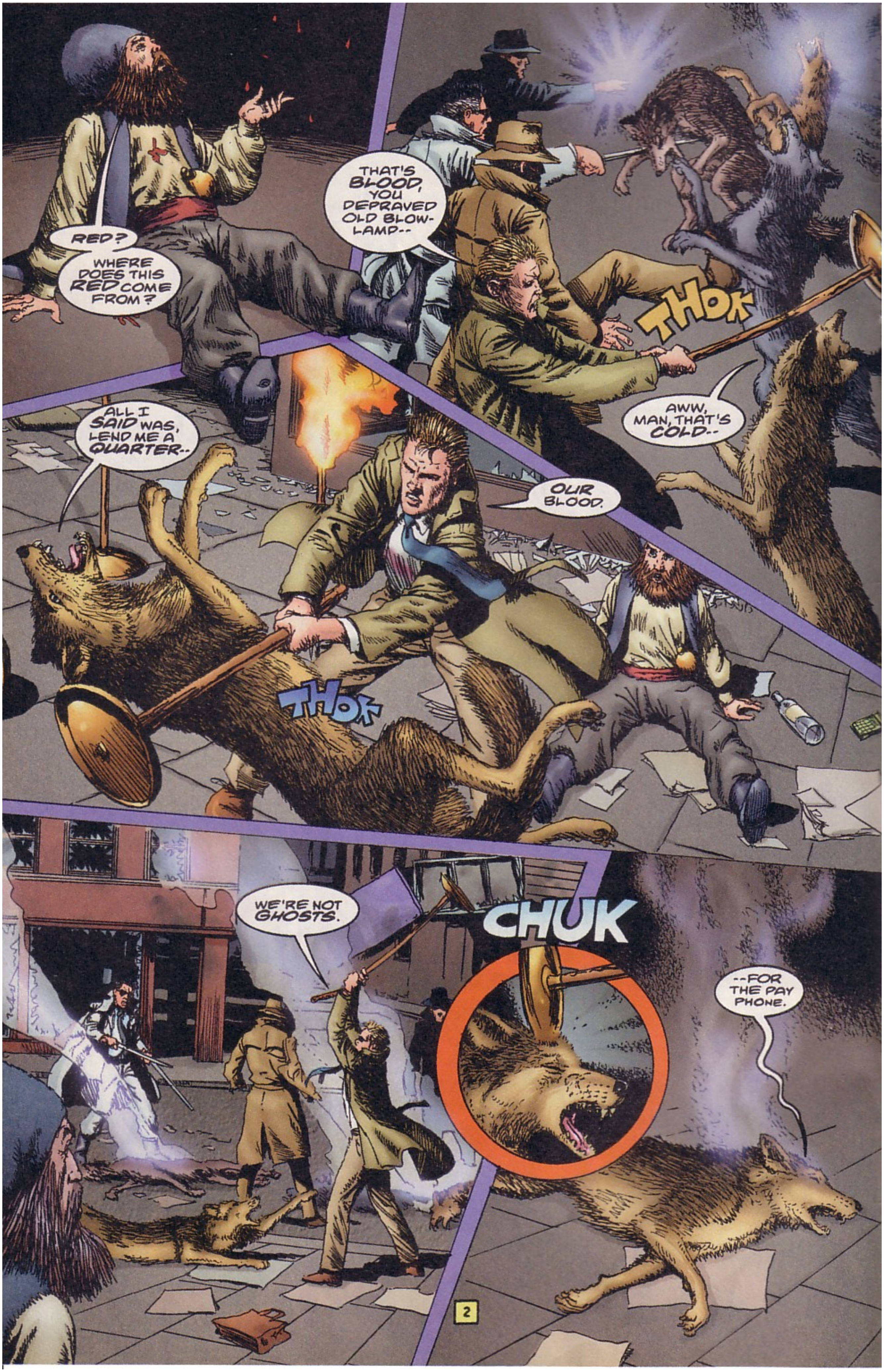
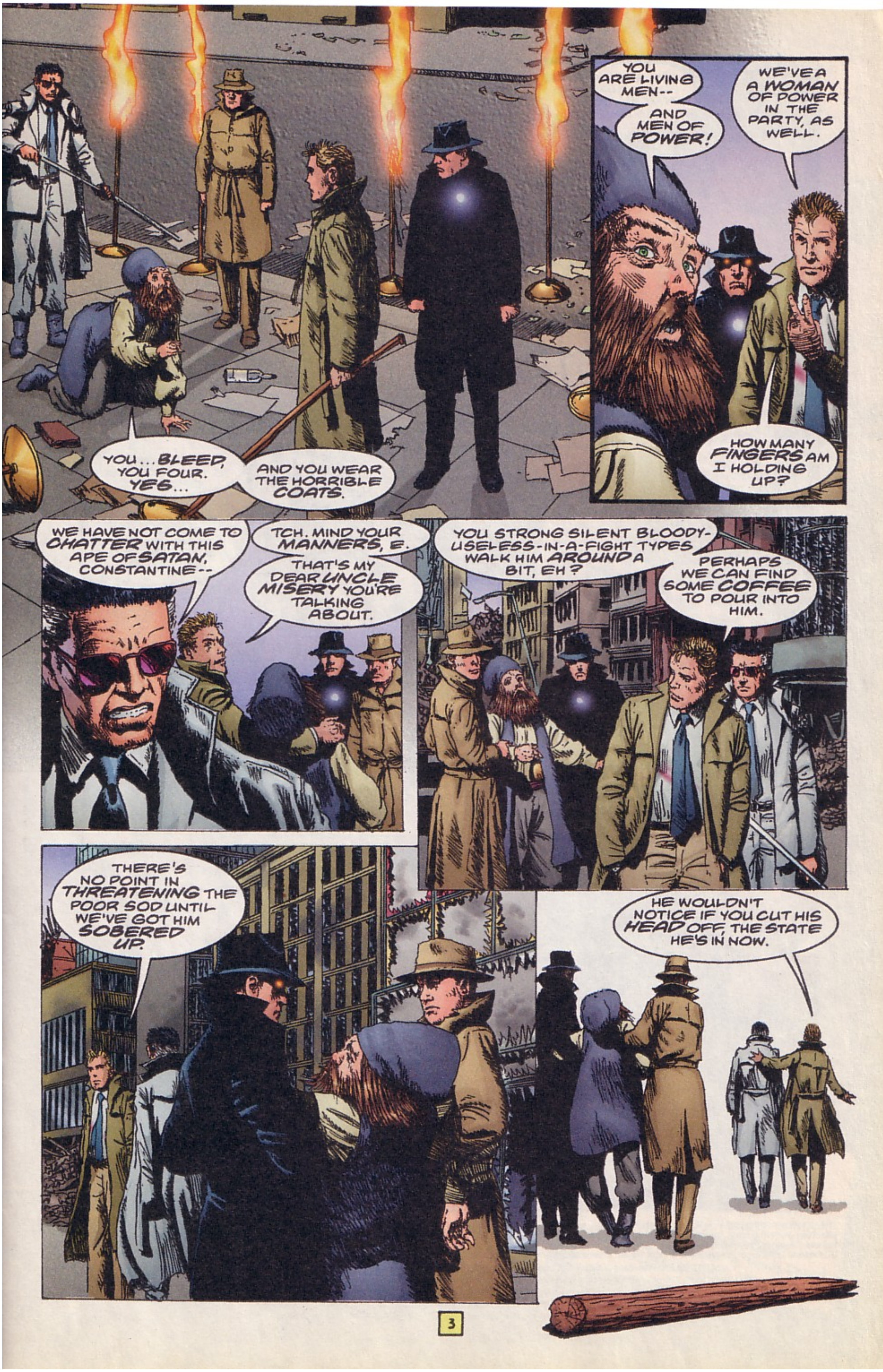
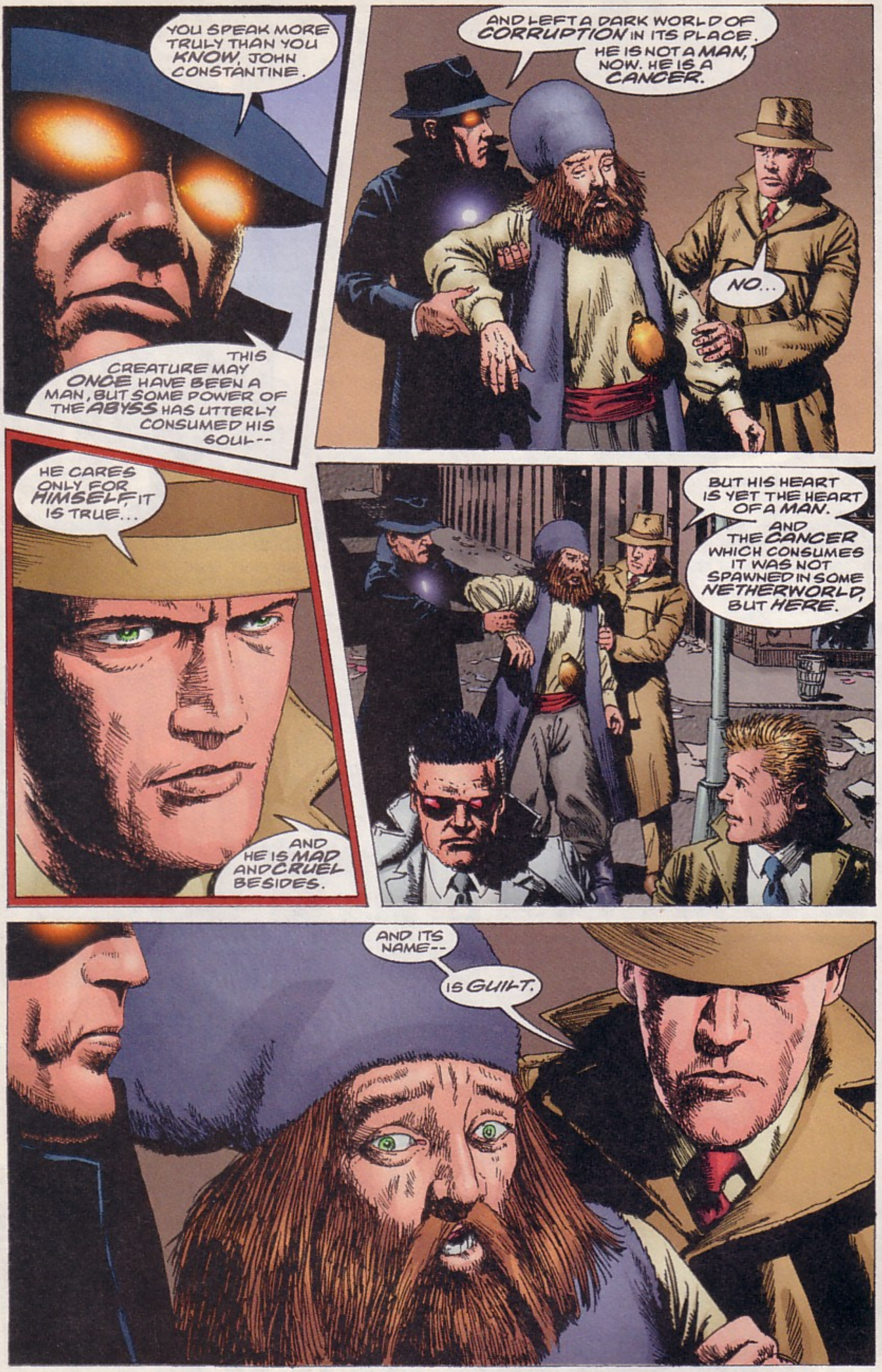
THE PHANTOM STRANGER + DOCTOR OCCULT
JOHN CONSTANTINE, HELLBLAZER + MISTER E


TIMES SQUARE.
NEW YORK.
THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW.
PLEASE DIE QUIETLY THIS TIME, GHOSTS.
NOT SCREAMING I WILL HEAR WHEN I TRY TO SLEEP.
I AM ONE SOFT-HEARTED AND INNOCENT MAN!
SNAP
DON'T KNOW NOTHING ABOUT NO THREE LITTLE PIGS. I WAS HOME ALL NIGHT, THE NIGHT THEY GOT ET--
VISITING GRANNY.
IT IS BY ACCIDENT I FEED YOU TO THE WHINING ONES. SPECTRES OF GUILT I DO NOT DESERVE.
I WOULD EXORCISE YOU KINDLY, WITH RAIN OF BEAUTIFUL PEACH BLOSSOMS, ONLY I HAVE FORGOTTEN THE SPELL.
SHE GOT THE HOUSE AND THE CAR AND THE KIDS. AND I NEVER REALLY HIT HER--
SKLITCH
SOME PEOPLE JUST BRUISE EASILY.


RED? WHERE DOES THIS RED COME FROM?
THAT'S BLOOD, YOU DEPRAVED OLD BLOW-LAMP--
THOK
AWW, MAN, THAT'S COLD--
ALL I SAID WAS, LEND ME A QUARTER--
OUR BLOOD.
THOK
WE'RE NOT GHOSTS.
CHUK
--FOR THE PAY PHONE.


YOU ...BLEED, YOU FOUR. YES...
AND YOU WEAR THE HORRIBLE COATS.
YOU ARE LIVING MEN--
AND MEN OF POWER!
WE'VE A A WOMAN OF POWER IN THE PARTY, AS WELL.
HOW MANY FINGERS AM I HOLDING UP?
WE HAVE NOT COME TO CHATTER WITH THIS APE OF SATAN, CONSTANTINE--
TCH. MIND YOUR MANNERS, E.
THAT'S MY DEAR UNCLE MISERY YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT.
YOU STRONG SILENT BLOODY-USELESS-IN-A-FIGHT TYPES WALK HIM AROUND A BIT, EH?
PERHAPS WE CAN FIND SOME COFFEE TO POUR INTO HIM.
THERE'S NO POINT IN THREATENING THE POOR SOD UNTIL WE'VE GOT HIM SOBERED UP.
HE WOULDN'T NOTICE IF YOU CUT HIS HEAD OFF, THE STATE HE'S IN NOW.


YOU SPEAK MORE TRULY THAN YOU KNOW, JOHN CONSTANTINE.
THIS CREATURE MAY ONCE HAVE BEEN A MAN, BUT SOME POWER OF THE ABYSS HAS UTTERLY CONSUMED HIS SOUL--
AND LEFT A DARK WORLD OF CORRUPTION IN ITS PLACE. HE IS NOT A MAN, NOW. HE IS A CANCER.
NO...
HE CARES ONLY FOR HIMSELF IT IS TRUE...
AND HE IS MAD AND CRUEL BESIDES.
BUT HIS HEART IS YET THE HEART OF A MAN.
AND THE CANCER WHICH CONSUMES IT WAS NOT SPAWNED IN SOME NETHERWORLD, BUT HERE.
AND ITS NAME--
IS GUILT.

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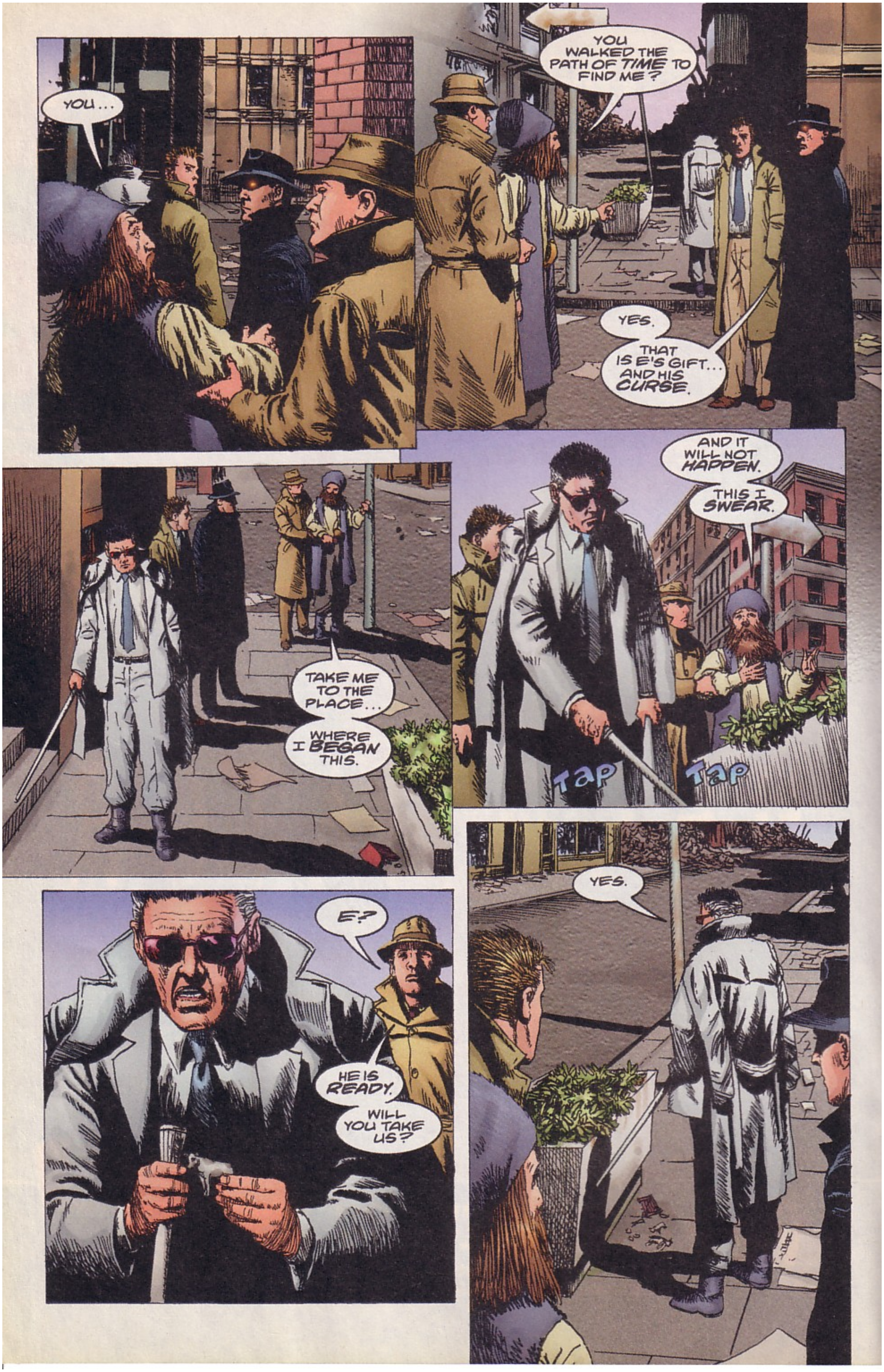
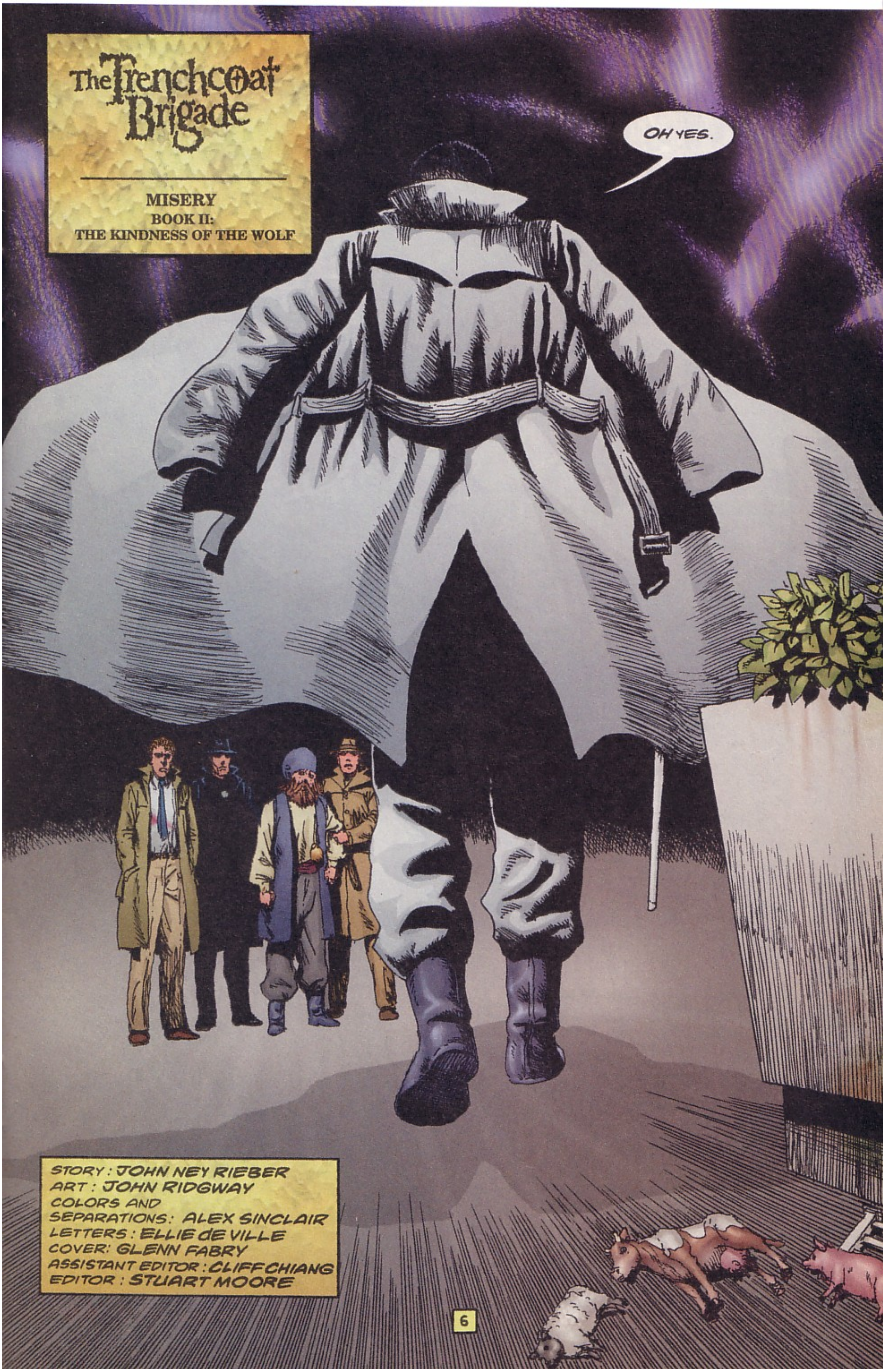

YOU...
YOU WALKED THE PATH OF TIME TO FIND ME?
YES.
THAT IS E'S GIFT... AND HIS CURSE.
TAKE ME TO THE PLACE...
WHERE I BEGAN THIS.
AND IT WILL NOT HAPPEN.
THIS I SWEAR.
TAP
TAP
E?
HE IS READY.
WILL YOU TAKE US?
YES.

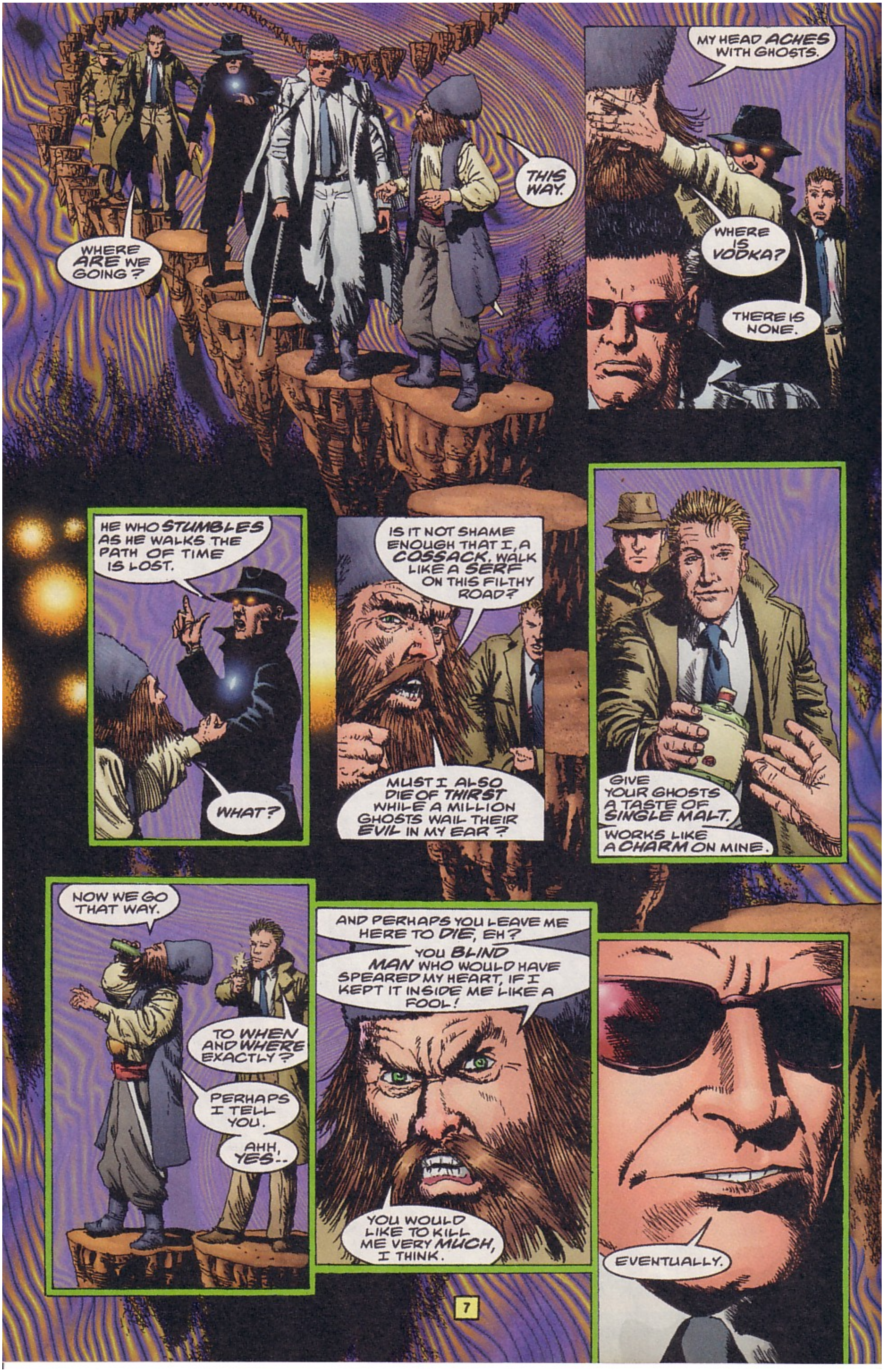


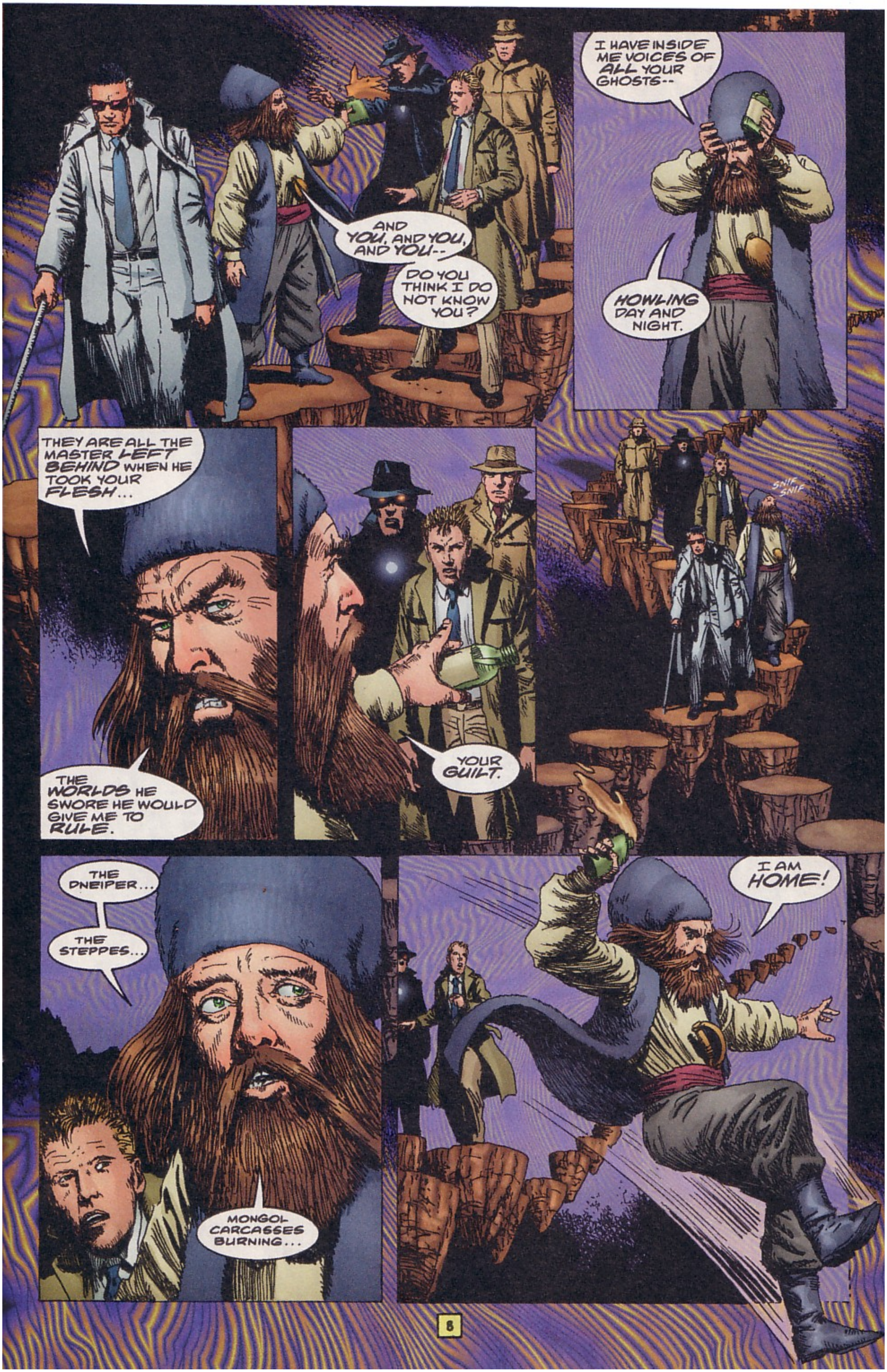
The Trenchcoat Brigade

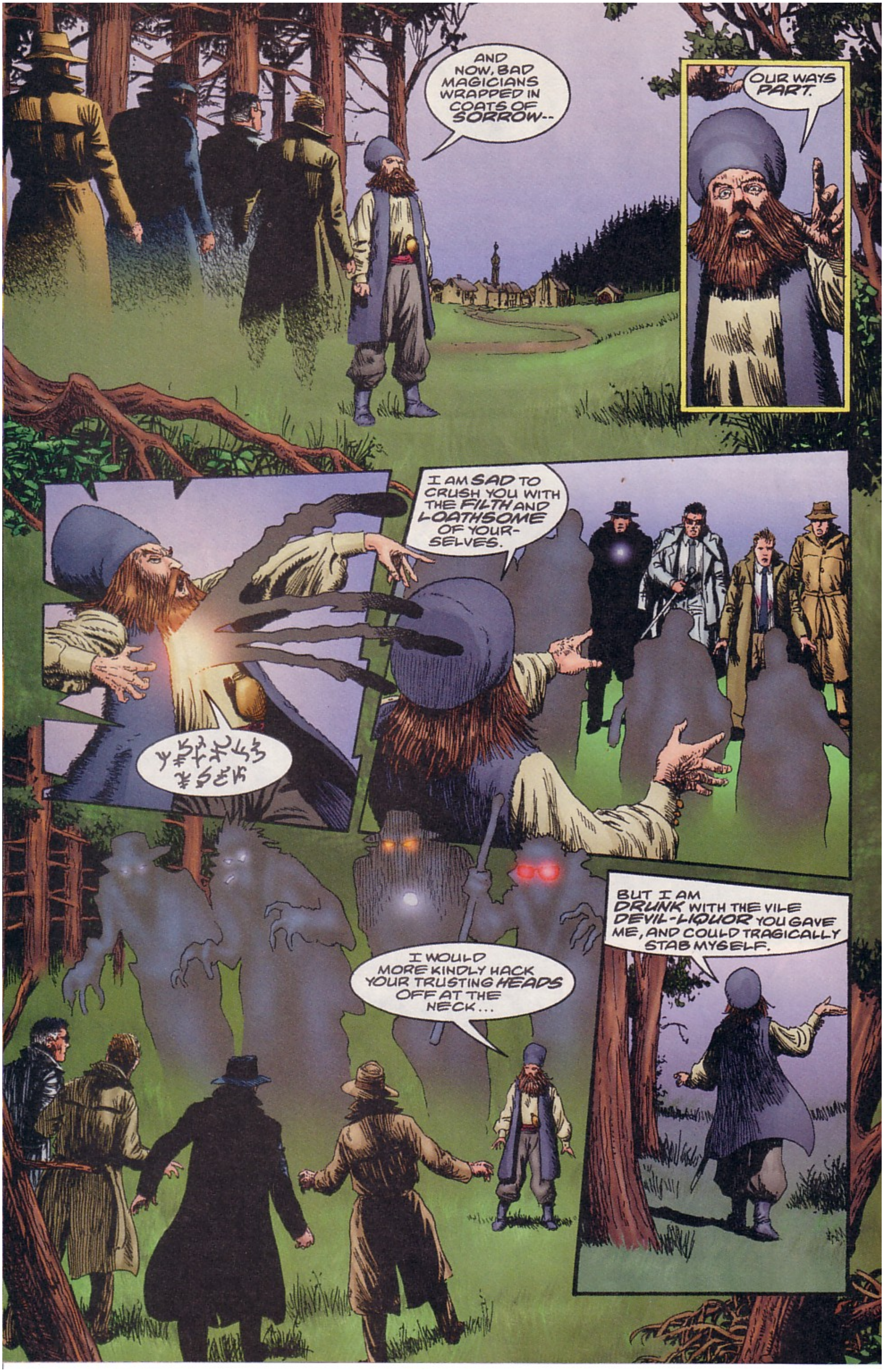
MISERY

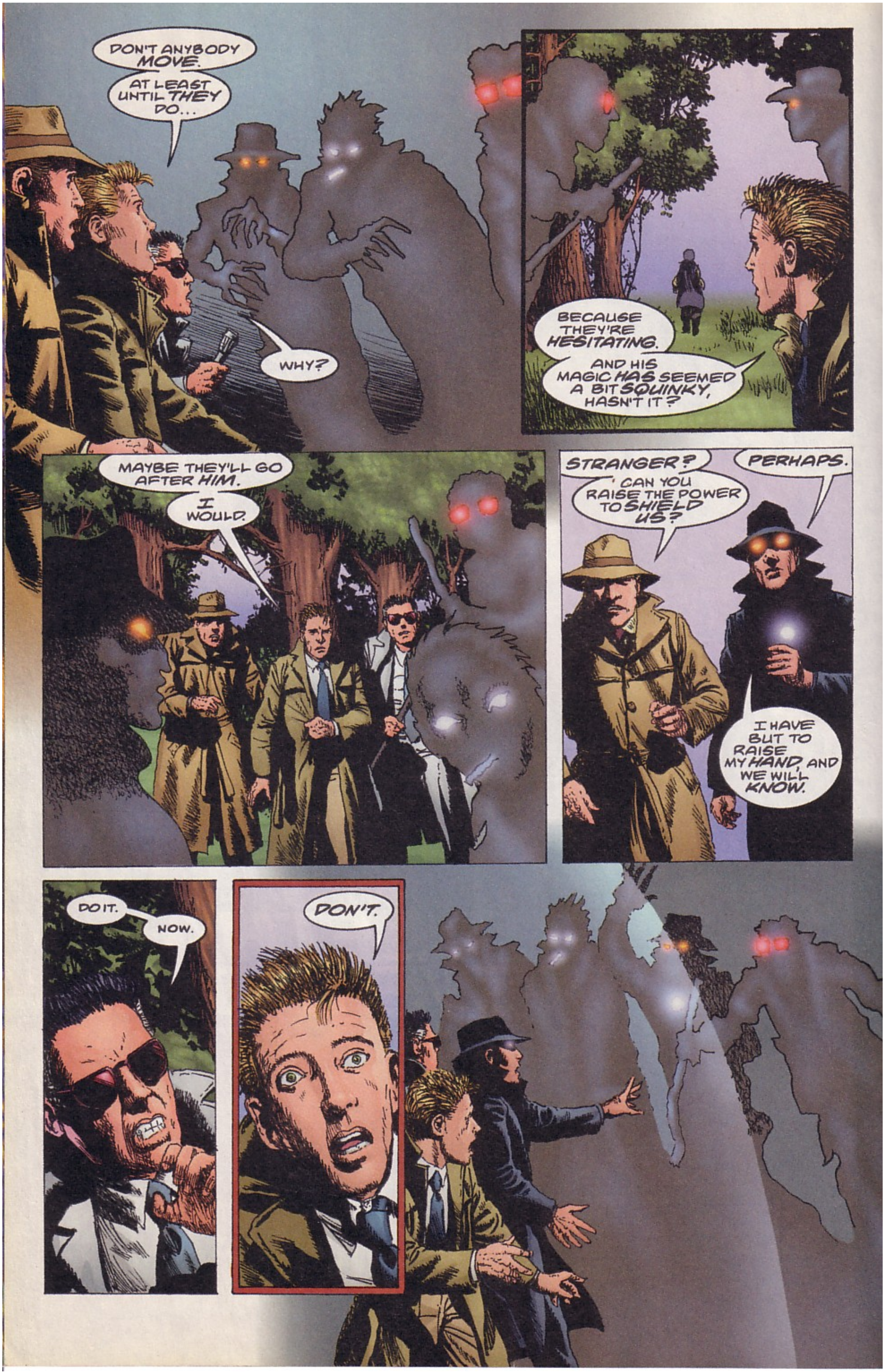
BOOK II: THE KINDNESS OF THE WOLF

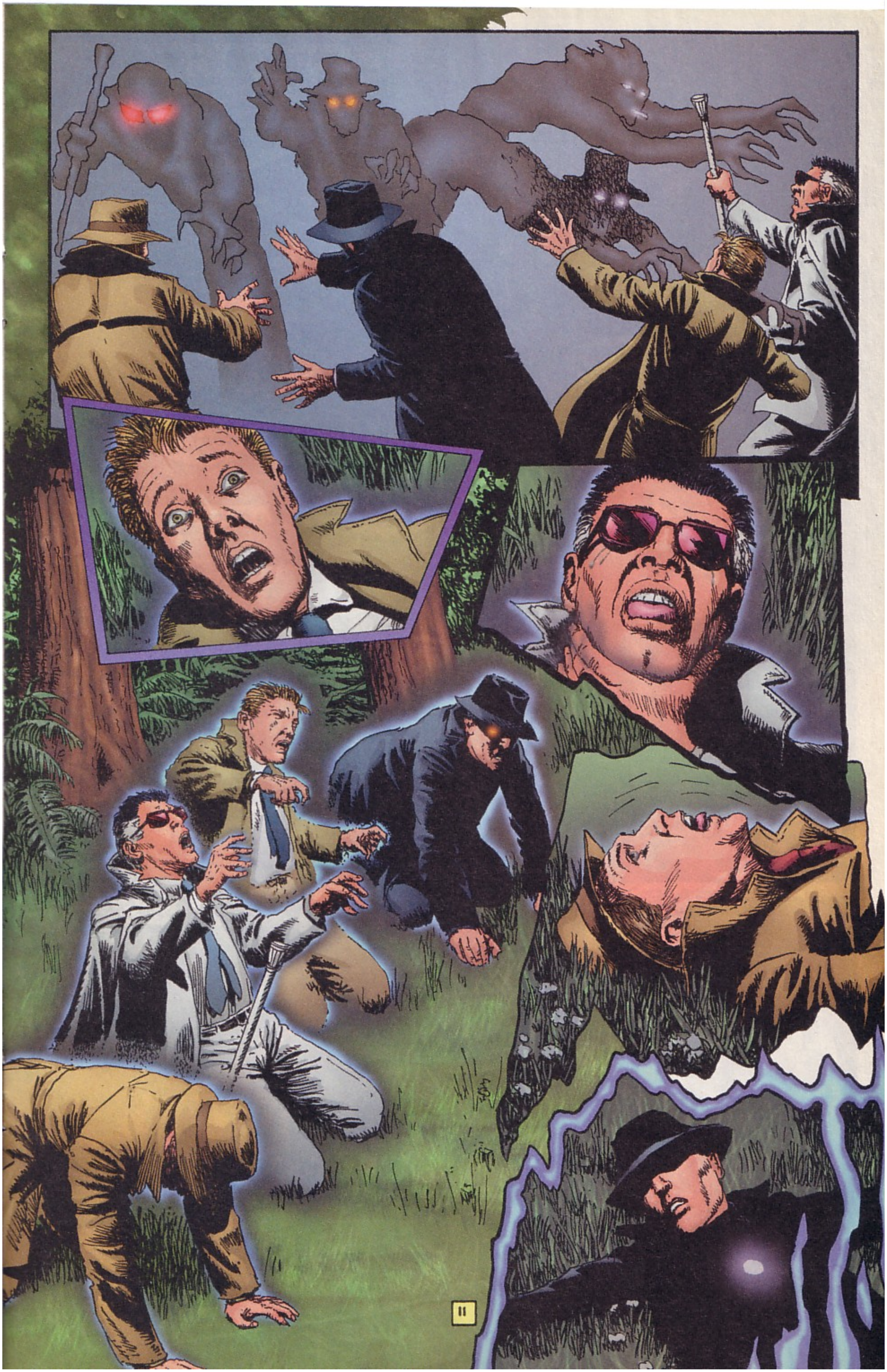
STORY: JOHN NEY RIEBER
ART: JOHN RIDGWAY
COLORS AND SEPARATIONS: ALEX SINCLAIR
LETTERS: ELLIE DE VILLE
COVER: GLENN FABRY
ASSISTANT EDITOR: CLIFF CHIANG
EDITOR: STUART MOORE

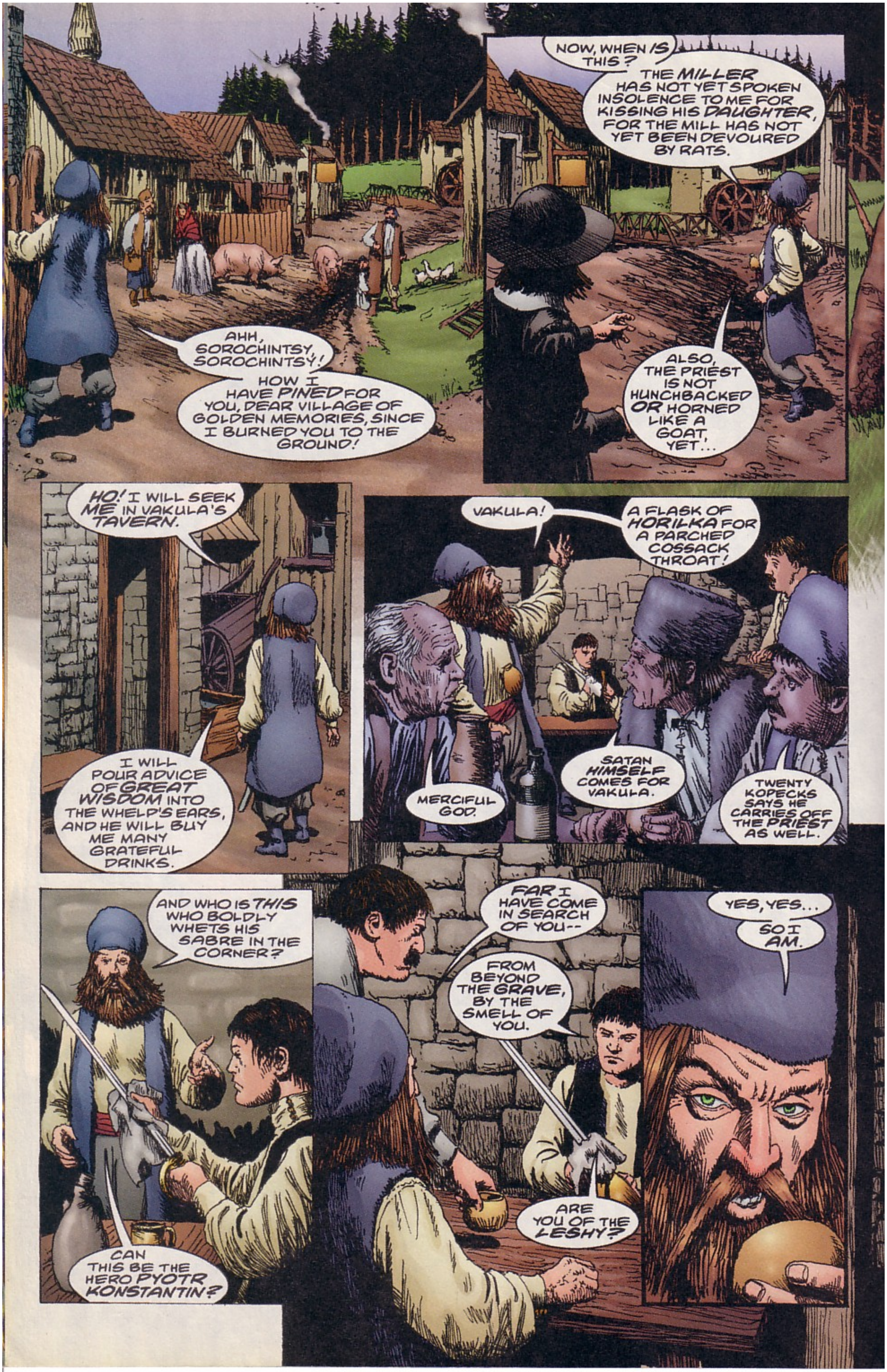

THIS WAY.
WHERE ARE WE GOING?
MY HEAD ACHES WITH GHOSTS.
WHERE IS VODKA?
THERE IS NONE.
HE WHO STUMBLES AS HE WALKS THE PATH OF TIME IS LOST.
WHAT?
IS IT NOT SHAME ENOUGH THAT I, A COSSACK, WALK LIKE A SERF ON THIS FILTHY ROAD?
MUST I ALSO DIE OF THIRST WHILE A MILLION GHOSTS WAIL THEIR EVIL IN MY EAR?
GIVE YOUR GHOSTS A TASTE OF SINGLE MALT.
WORKS LIKE A CHARM ON MINE.
NOW WE GO THAT WAY.
TO WHEN AND WHERE EXACTLY?
PERHAPS I TELL YOU.
AHH, YES...
AND PERHAPS YOU LEAVE ME HERE TO DIE, EH?
YOU BLIND MAN WHO WOULD HAVE SPEARED MY HEART, IF I KEPT IT INSIDE ME LIKE A FOOL!
YOU WOULD LIKE TO KILL ME VERY MUCH, I THINK.
EVENTUALLY.

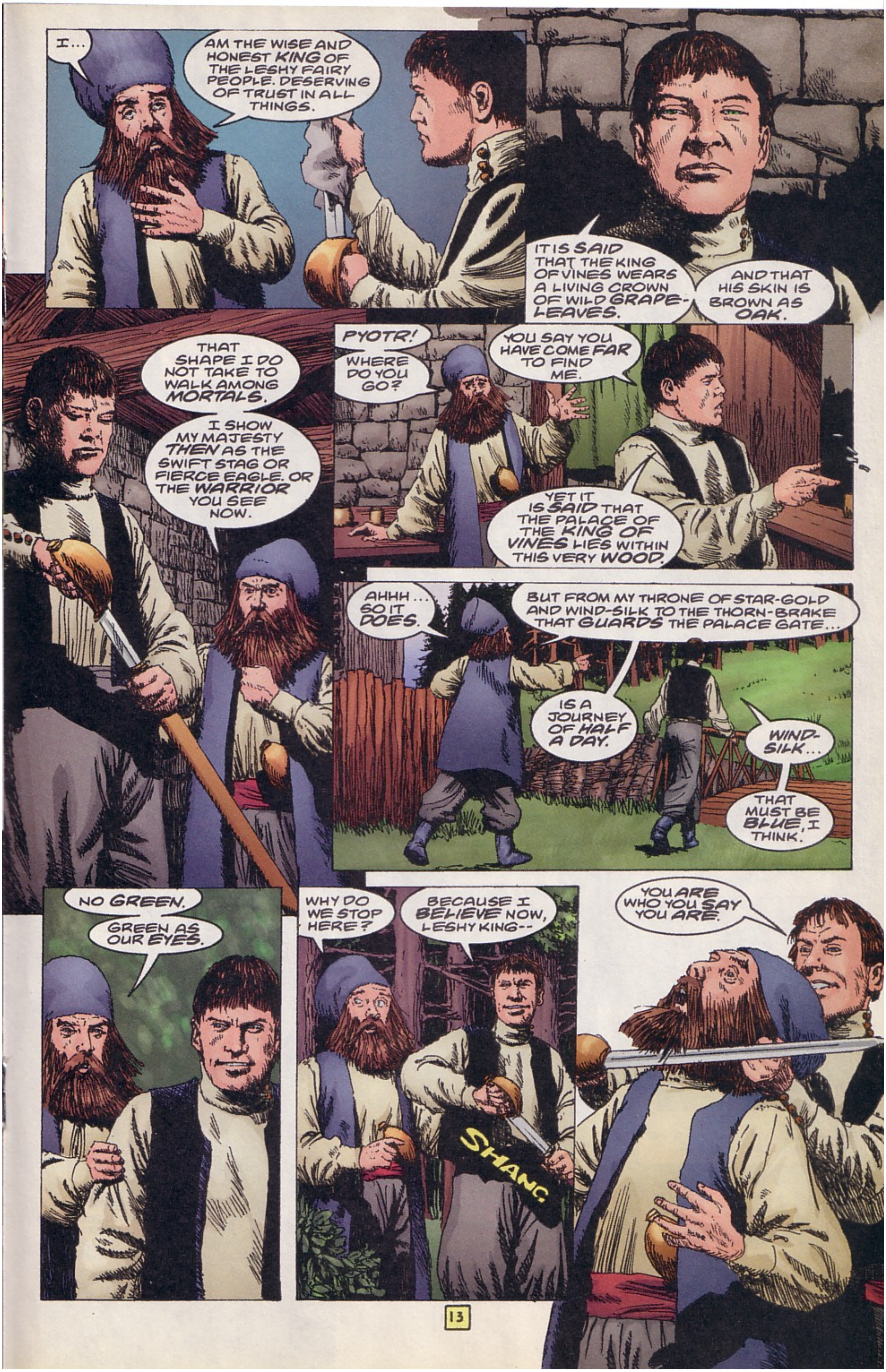

AND YOU, AND YOU, AND YOU--
DO YOU THINK I DO NOT KNOW YOU?
I HAVE INSIDE ME VOICES OF ALL YOUR GHOSTS--
HOWLING DAY AND NIGHT.
THEY ARE ALL THE MASTER LEFT BEHIND WHEN HE TOOK YOUR FLESH...
THE WORLDS HE SWORE HE WOULD GIVE ME TO RULE.
YOUR GUILT.
SNIF SNIF
THE DNEIPER...
THE STEPPES...
MONGOL CARCASSES BURNING...
I AM HOME!

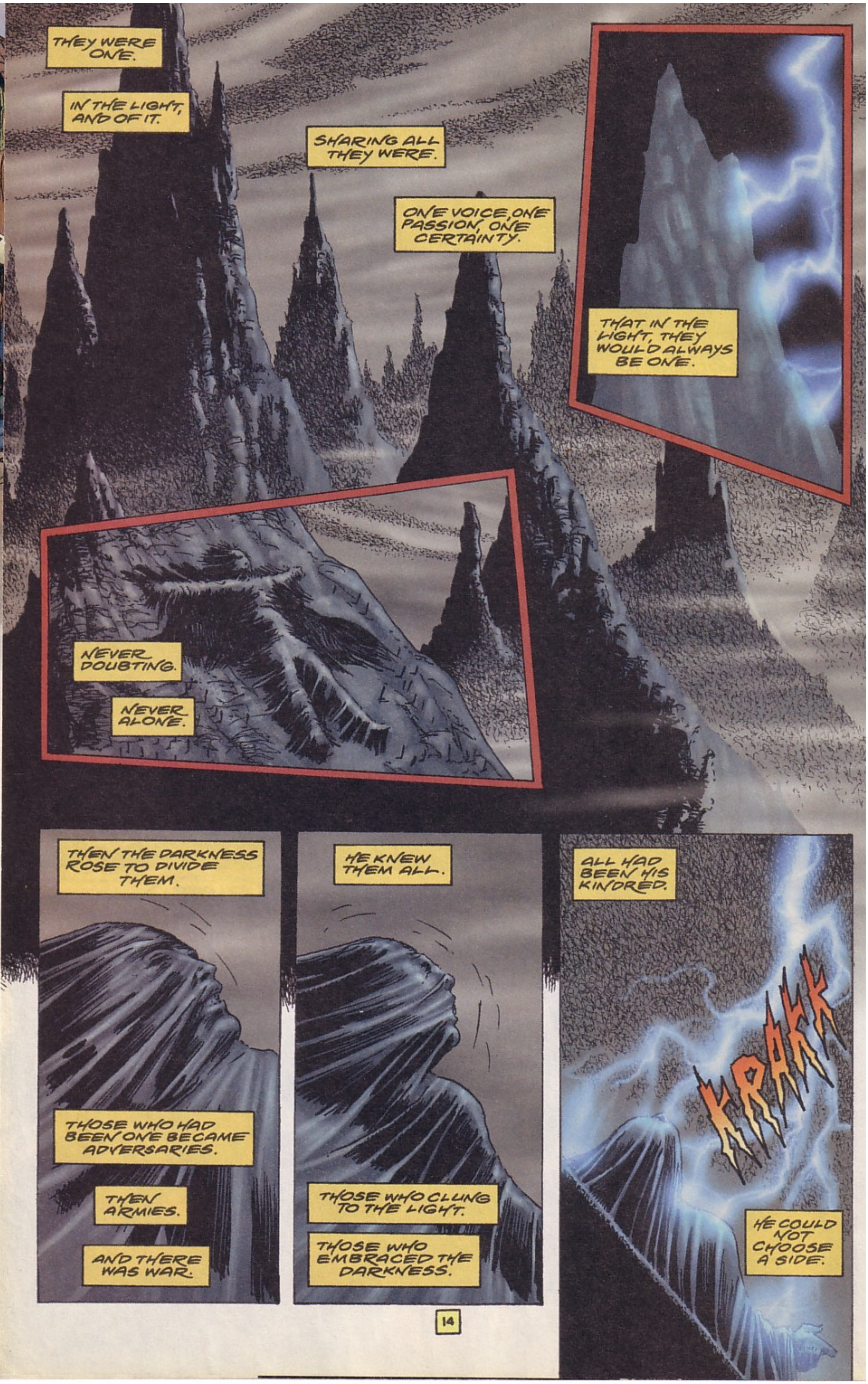

AND NOW, BAD MAGICIANS WRAPPED IN COATS OF *SORROW*--
OUR WAYS *PART.*
I AM *SAD* TO CRUSH YOU WITH THE *FILTH* AND *LOATHSOME* OF YOURSELVES.
I WOULD MORE KINDLY HACK YOUR TRUSTING *HEADS* OFF AT THE NECK...
BUT I AM *DRUNK* WITH THE VILE *DEVIL-LIQUOR* YOU GAVE ME, AND COULD TRAGICALLY STAB MYSELF.

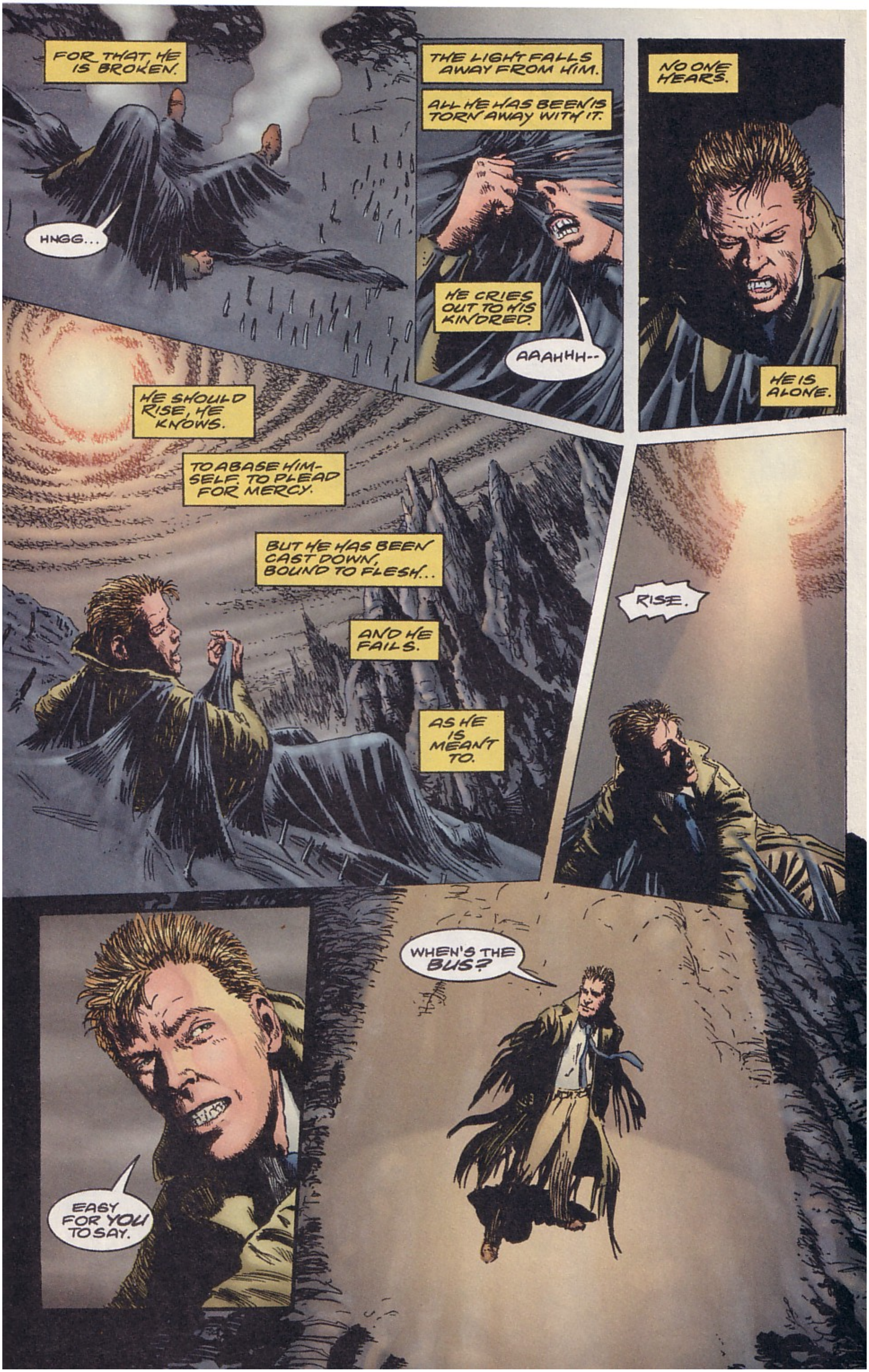

DON'T ANYBODY MOVE.
AT LEAST UNTIL THEY DO...
WHY?
BECAUSE THEY'RE HESITATING.
AND HIS MAGIC HAS SEEMED A BIT SQUINKY, HASN'T IT?
MAYBE THEY'LL GO AFTER HIM.
I WOULD.
STRANGER?
CAN YOU RAISE THE POWER TO SHIELD US?
PERHAPS.
I HAVE BUT TO RAISE MY HAND, AND WE WILL KNOW.
DO IT.
NOW.
DON'T.

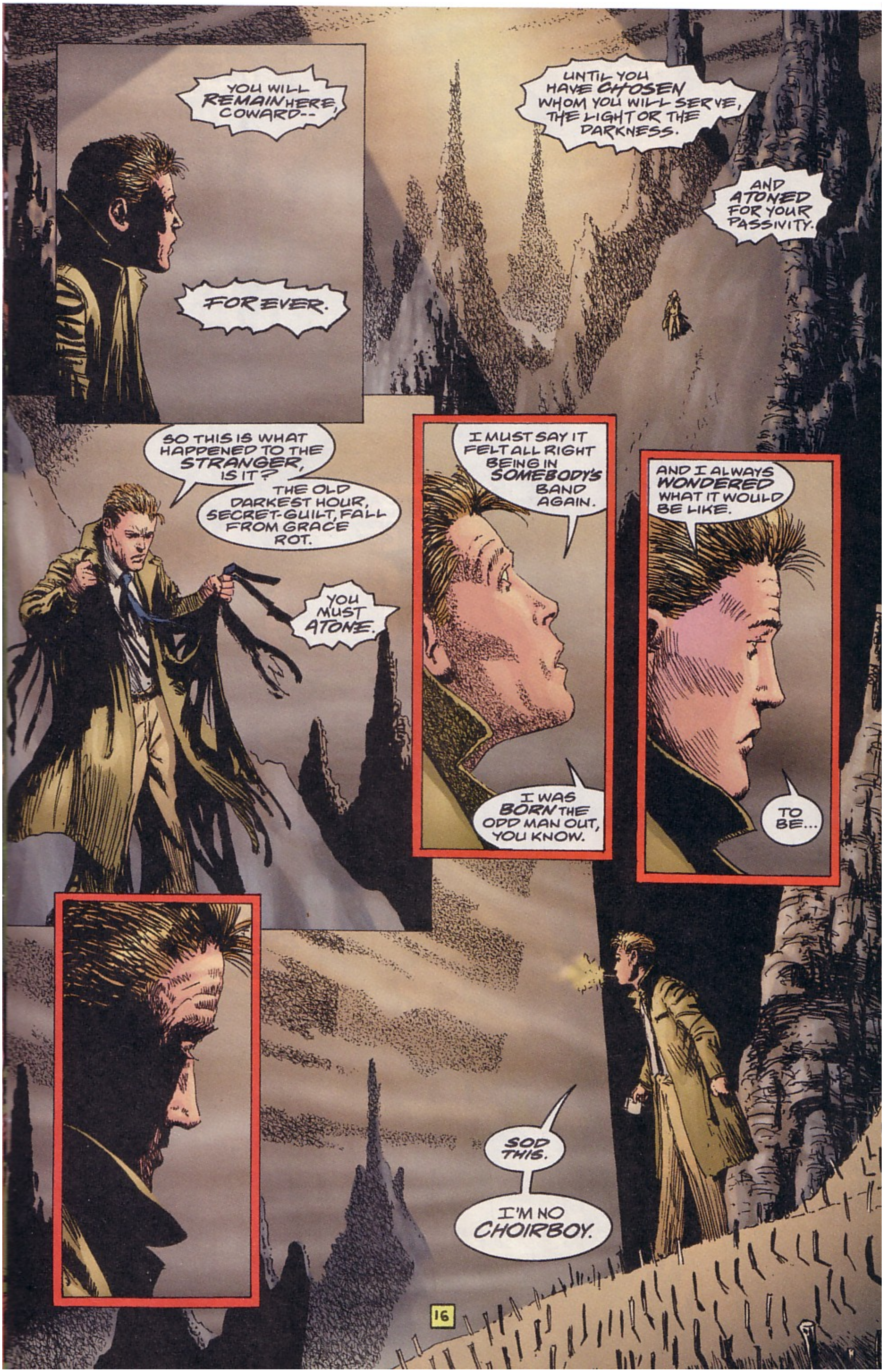


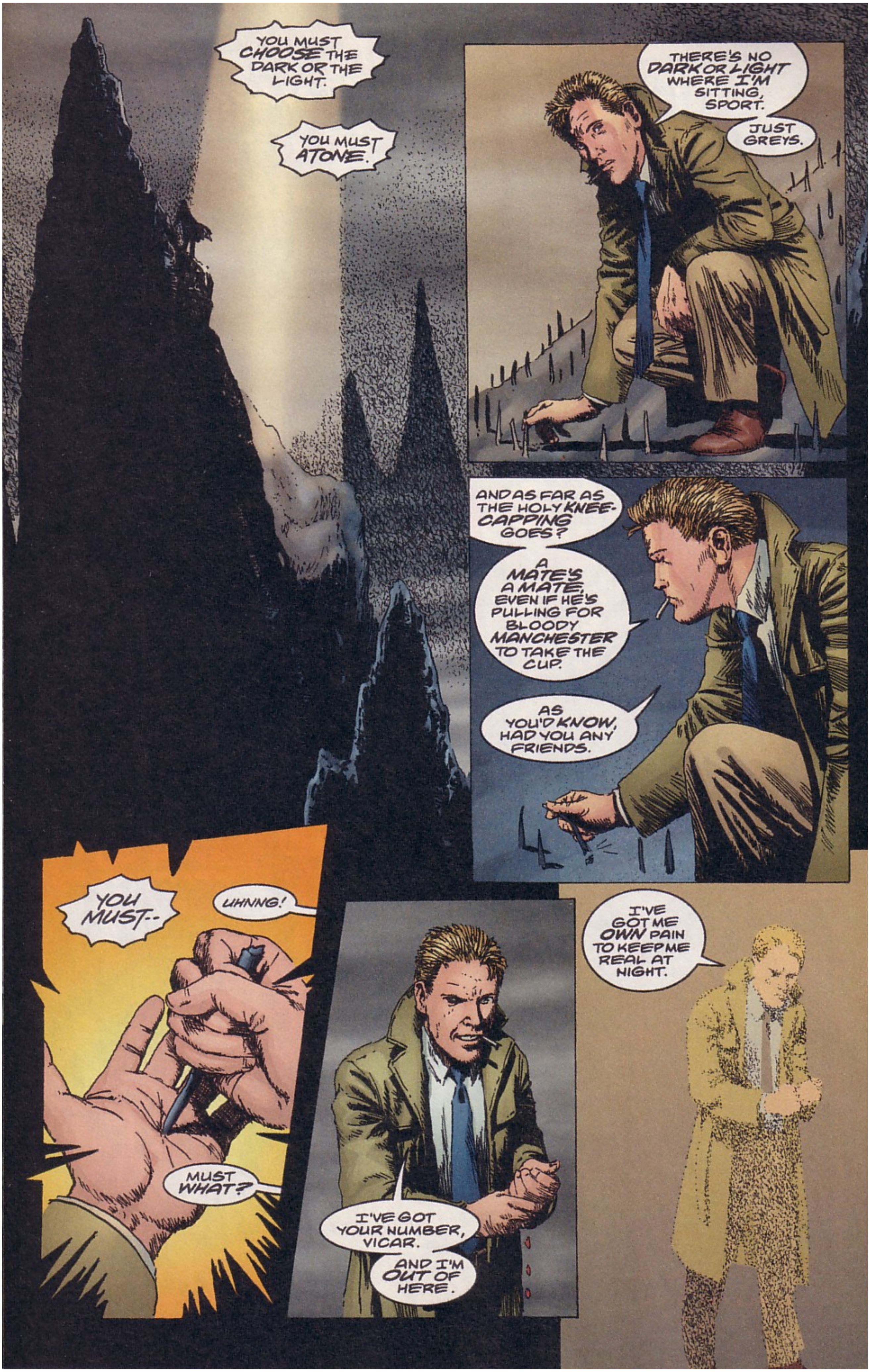

AHH, SOROCHINTSY, SOROCHINTSY! HOW I HAVE PINED FOR YOU, DEAR VILLAGE OF GOLDEN MEMORIES, SINCE I BURNED YOU TO THE GROUND!
NOW, WHEN IS THIS?
THE MILLER HAS NOT YET SPOKEN INSOLENCE TO ME FOR KISSING HIS DAUGHTER, FOR THE MILL HAS NOT YET BEEN DEVOURED BY RATS.
ALSO, THE PRIEST IS NOT HUNCHBACKED OR HORNED LIKE A GOAT, YET...
HO! I WILL SEEK ME IN VAKULA'S TAVERN.
I WILL POUR ADVICE OF GREAT WISDOM INTO THE WHELP'S EARS, AND HE WILL BUY ME MANY GRATEFUL DRINKS.
VAKULA!
A FLASK OF HORILKA FOR A PARCHED COSSACK THROAT!
MERCIFUL GOD.
SATAN HIMSELF COMES FOR VAKULA.
TWENTY KOPECKS SAYS HE CARRIES OFF THE PRIEST AS WELL.
AND WHO IS THIS WHO BOLDLY WHETS HIS SABRE IN THE CORNER?
CAN THIS BE THE HERO PYOTR KONSTANTIN?
FAR I HAVE COME IN SEARCH OF YOU--
FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE, BY THE SMELL OF YOU.
ARE YOU OF THE LESHY?
YES, YES...
SO I AM.

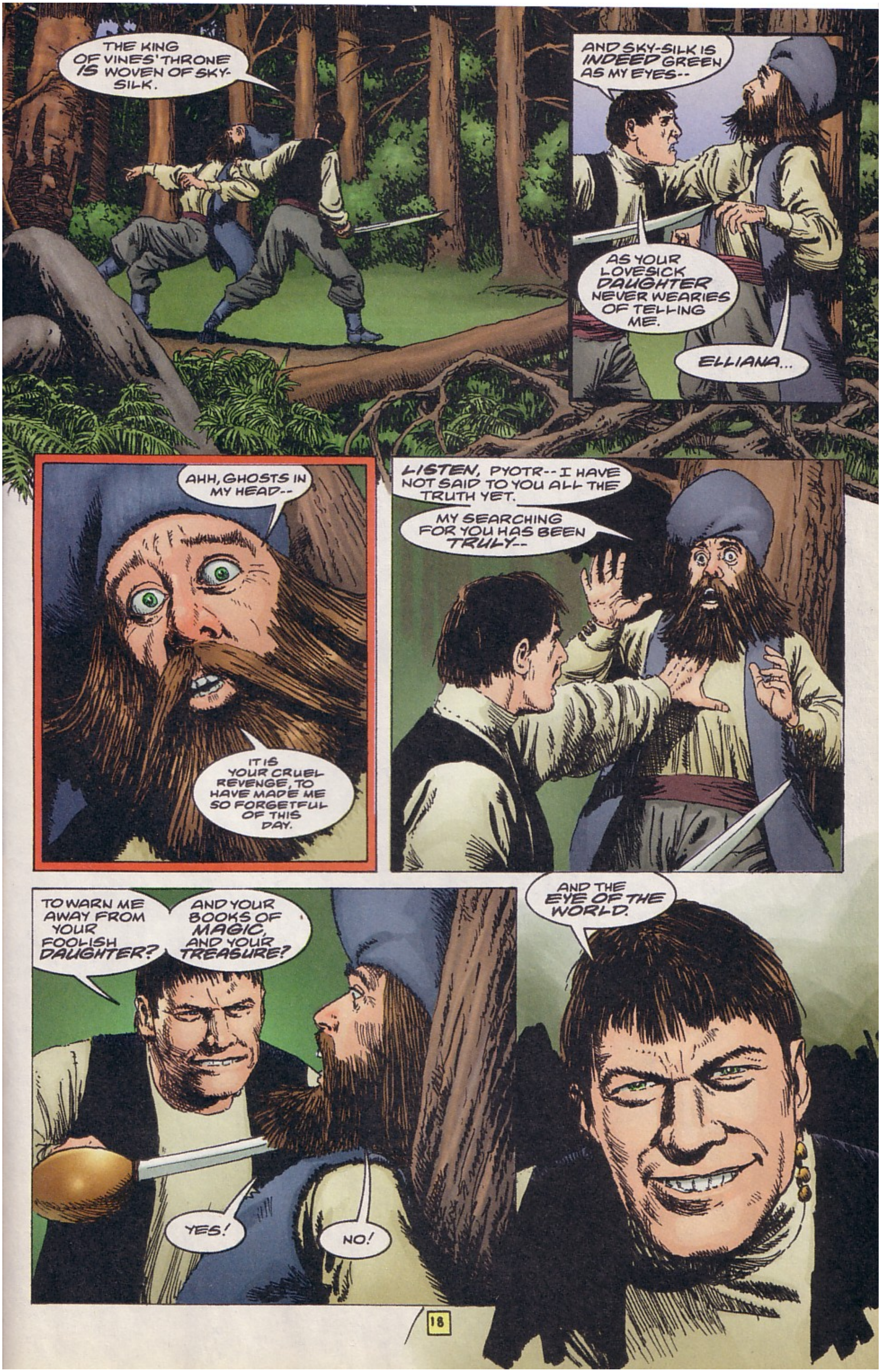

I...
AM THE WISE AND HONEST KING OF THE LESHY FAIRY PEOPLE. DESERVING OF TRUST IN ALL THINGS.
IT IS SAID THAT THE KING OF VINES WEARS A LIVING CROWN OF WILD GRAPE-LEAVES.
AND THAT HIS SKIN IS BROWN AS OAK.
THAT SHAPE I DO NOT TAKE TO WALK AMONG MORTALS.
I SHOW MY MAJESTY THEN AS THE SWIFT STAG OR FIERCE EAGLE. OR THE WARRIOR YOU SEE NOW.
PYOTR! WHERE DO YOU GO?
YOU SAY YOU HAVE COME FAR TO FIND ME.
YET IT IS SAID THAT THE PALACE OF THE KING OF VINES LIES WITHIN THIS VERY WOOD.
AHHH... SO IT DOES.
BUT FROM MY THRONE OF STAR-GOLD AND WIND-SILK TO THE THORN-BRAKE THAT GUARDS THE PALACE GATE...
IS A JOURNEY OF HALF A DAY.
WIND-SILK...
THAT MUST BE BLUE, I THINK.
NO GREEN.
GREEN AS OUR EYES.
WHY DO WE STOP HERE?
BECAUSE I BELIEVE NOW, LESHY KING--
SHANG
YOU ARE WHO YOU SAY YOU ARE.

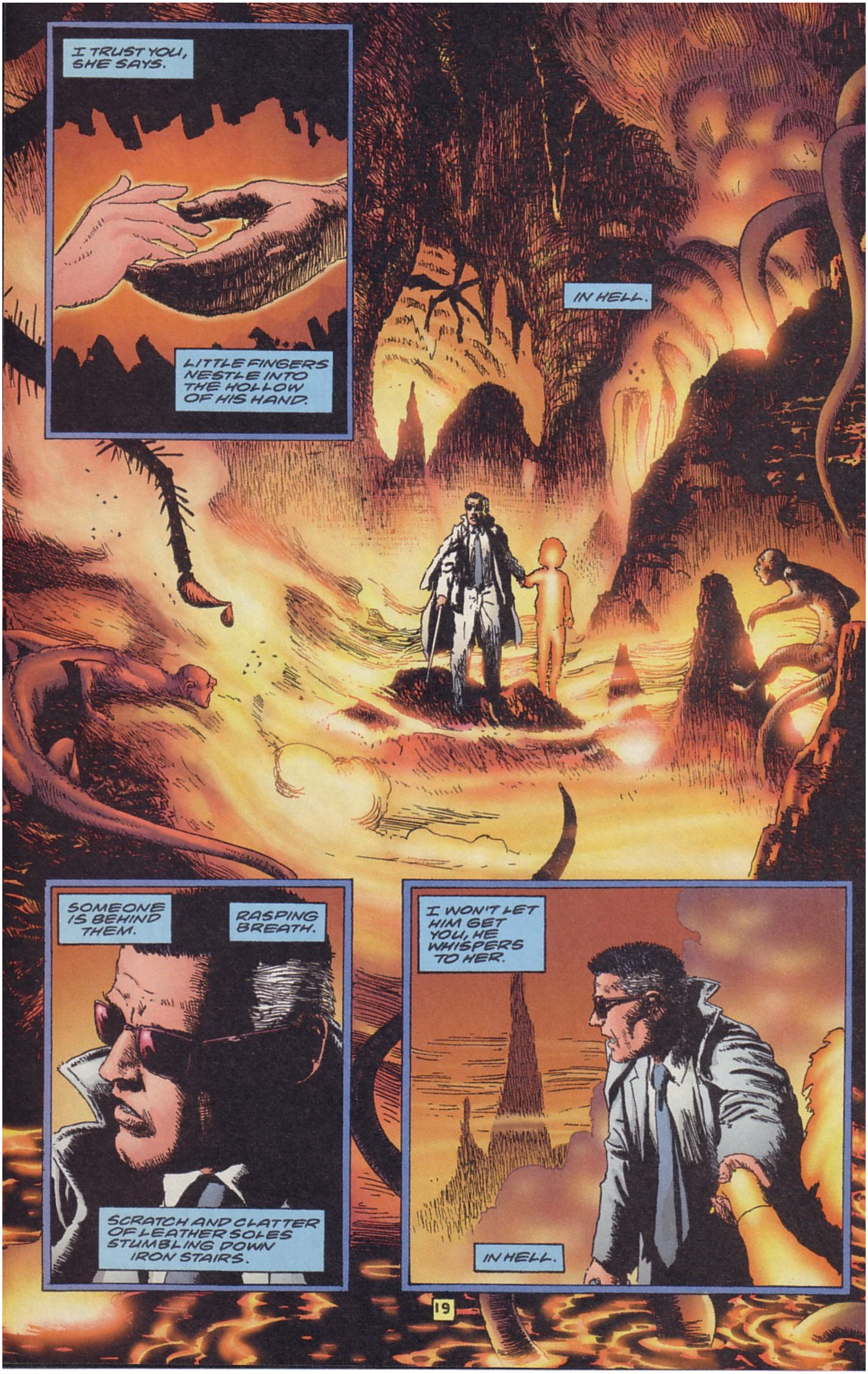

THEY WERE ONE.
IN THE LIGHT, AND OF IT.
SHARING ALL THEY WERE.
ONE VOICE, ONE PASSION, ONE CERTAINTY.
THAT IN THE LIGHT, THEY WOULD ALWAYS BE ONE.
NEVER DOUBTING.
NEVER ALONE.
THEN THE DARKNESS ROSE TO DIVIDE THEM.
THOSE WHO HAD BEEN ONE BECAME ADVERSARIES.
THEN ARMIES.
AND THERE WAS WAR.
HE KNEW THEM ALL.
THOSE WHO CLUNG TO THE LIGHT.
THOSE WHO EMBRACED THE DARKNESS.
ALL HAD BEEN HIS KINDRED.
KRAKK
HE COULD NOT CHOOSE A SIDE.

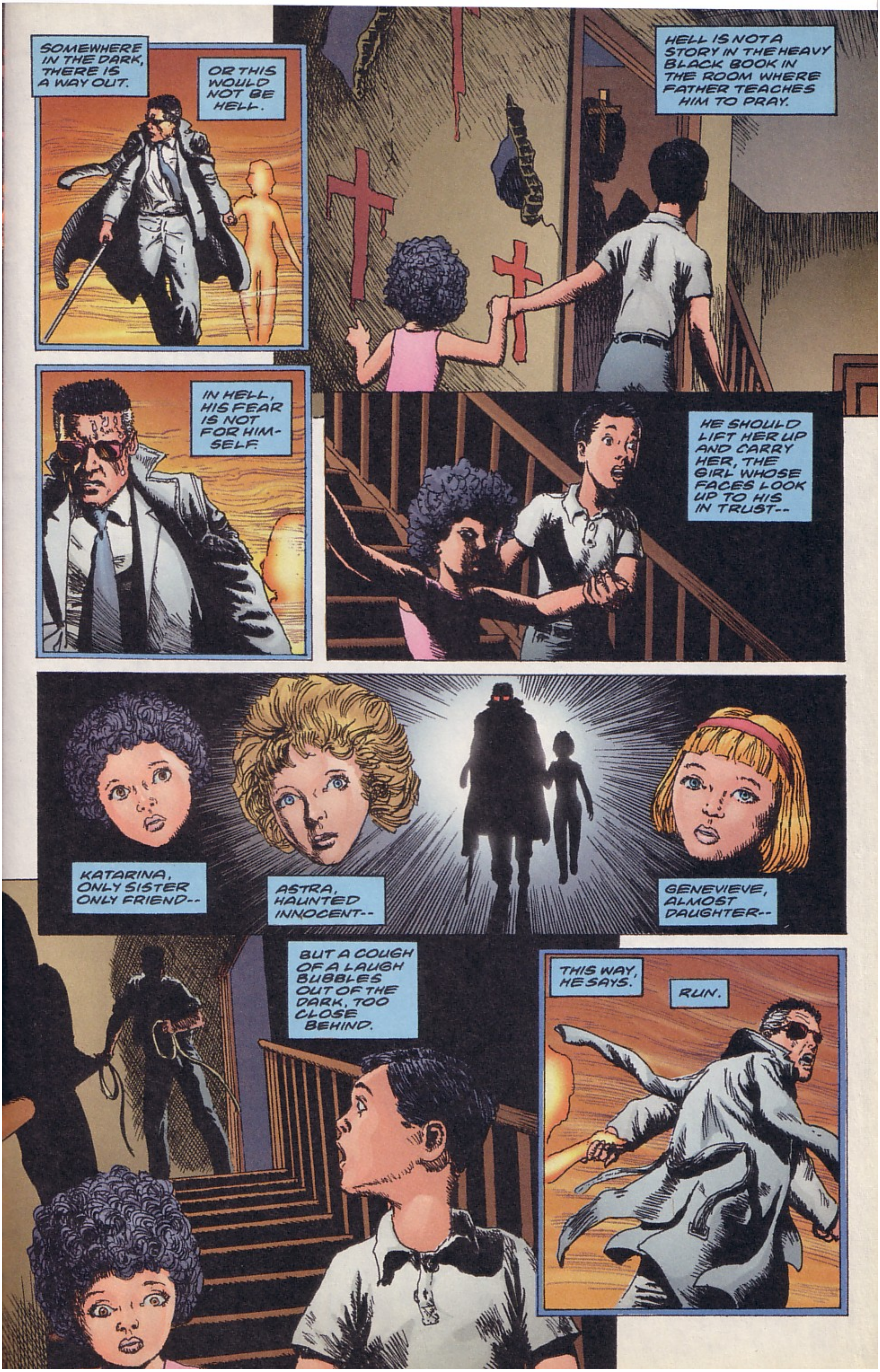

FOR THAT, HE IS BROKEN.
HNGG...
THE LIGHT FALLS AWAY FROM HIM.
ALL HE HAS BEEN IS TORN AWAY WITH IT.
HE CRIES OUT TO HIS KINDRED.
AAAHHH--
NO ONE HEARS.
HE IS ALONE.
HE SHOULD RISE, HE KNOWS.
TO ABASE HIMSELF. TO PLEAD FOR MERCY.
BUT HE HAS BEEN CAST DOWN, BOUND TO FLESH...
AND HE FAILS.
AS HE IS MEANT TO.
RISE.
EASY FOR YOU TO SAY.
WHEN'S THE BUS?

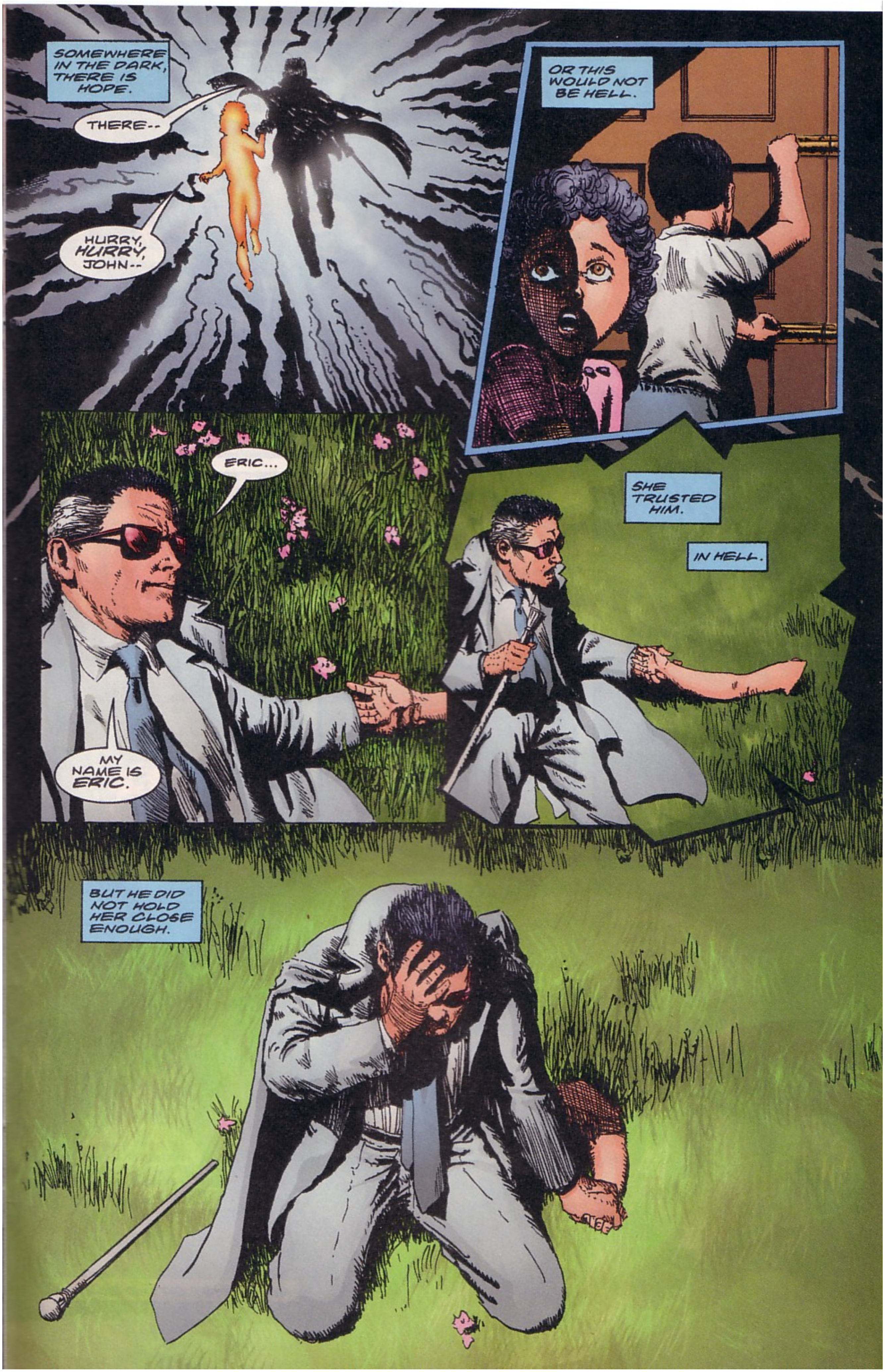

YOU WILL REMAIN HERE, COWARD--
FOREVER.
UNTIL YOU HAVE CHOSEN WHOM YOU WILL SERVE, THE LIGHT OR THE DARKNESS.
AND ATONED FOR YOUR PASSIVITY.
SO THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED TO THE STRANGER, IS IT?
THE OLD DARKEST HOUR, SECRET-GUILT, FALL FROM GRACE ROT.
YOU MUST ATONE.
I MUST SAY IT FELT ALL RIGHT BEING IN SOMEBODY'S BAND AGAIN.
I WAS BORN THE ODD MAN OUT, YOU KNOW.
AND I ALWAYS WONDERED WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE.
TO BE...
SOD THIS.
I'M NO CHOIRBOY.

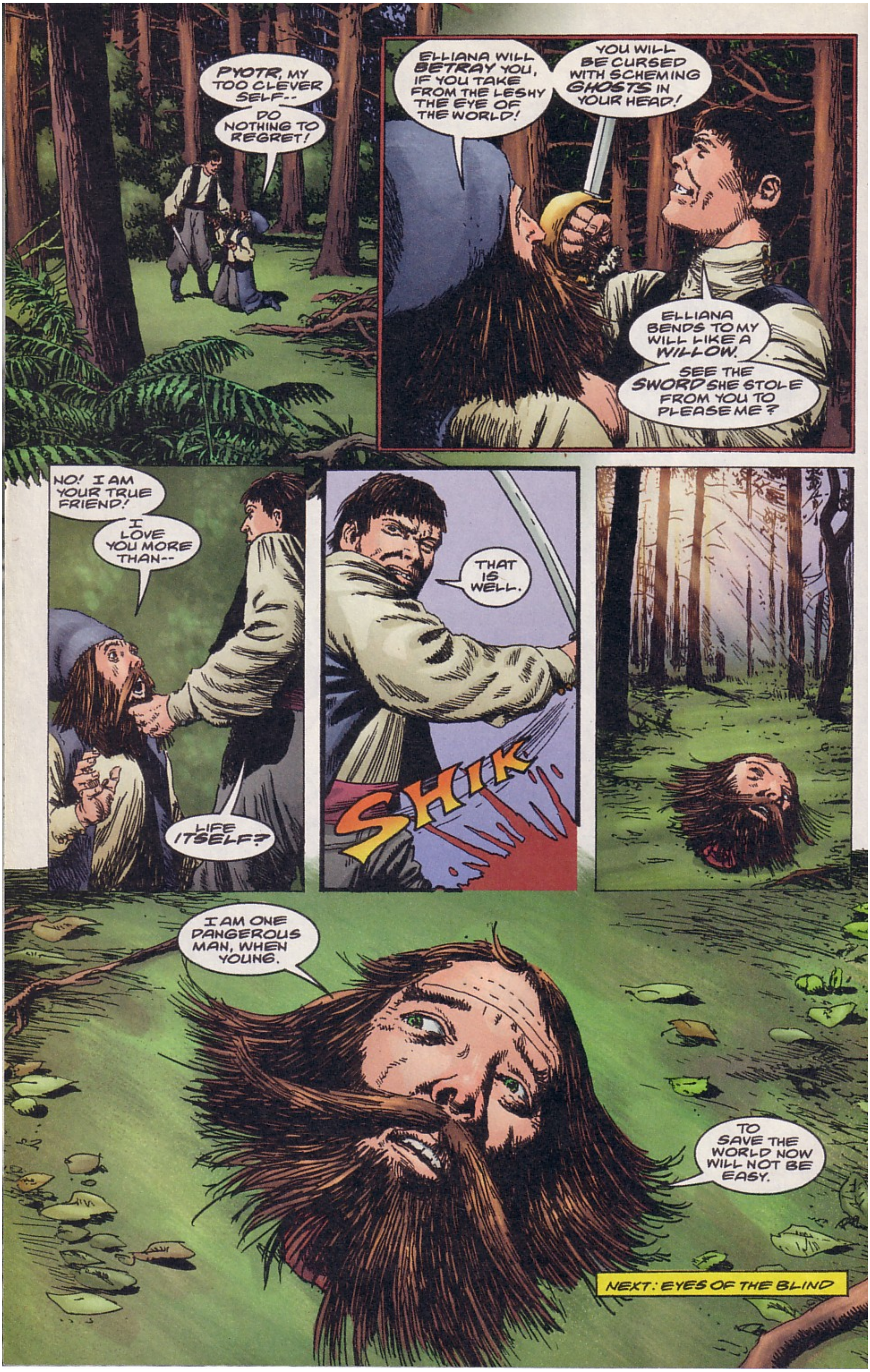

YOU MUST CHOOSE THE DARK OR THE LIGHT.
YOU MUST ATONE.
THERE'S NO DARK OR LIGHT WHERE I'M SITTING, SPORT.
JUST GREYS.
AND AS FAR AS THE HOLY KNEE-CAPPING GOES?
A MATE'S A MATE, EVEN IF HE'S PULLING FOR BLOODY MANCHESTER TO TAKE THE CUP.
AS YOU'D KNOW, HAD YOU ANY FRIENDS.
YOU MUST--
UHNNG!
MUST WHAT?
I'VE GOT YOUR NUMBER, VICAR.
AND I'M OUT OF HERE.
I'VE GOT ME OWN PAIN TO KEEP ME REAL AT NIGHT.

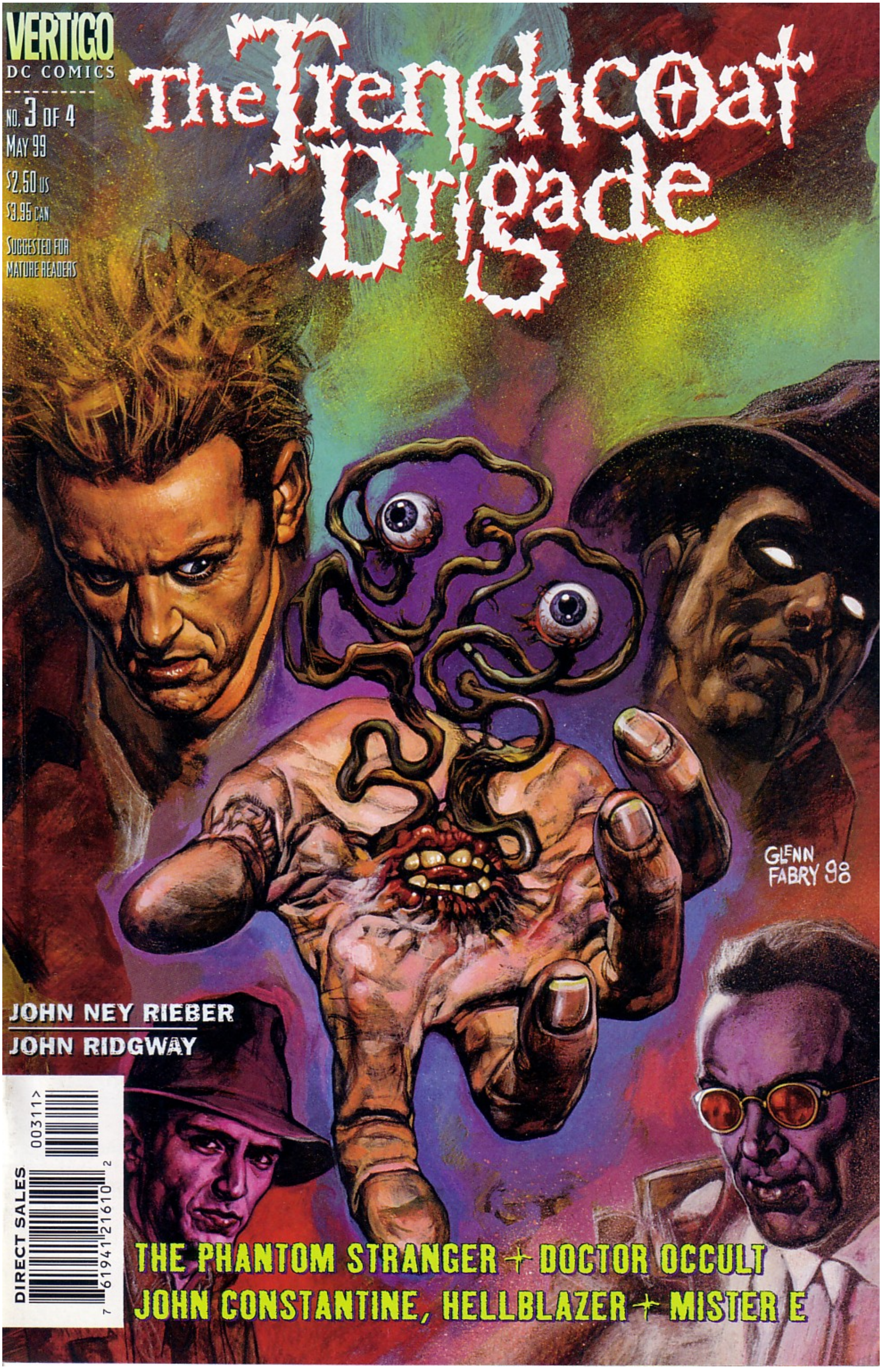

THE KING OF VINES' THRONE *IS* WOVEN OF SKY-SILK.
AND SKY-SILK IS *INDEED* GREEN AS MY EYES--
AS YOUR LOVESICK *DAUGHTER* NEVER WEARIES OF TELLING ME.
ELLIANA...
AHH, GHOSTS IN MY HEAD--
IT IS YOUR CRUEL REVENGE, TO HAVE MADE ME SO FORGETFUL OF THIS DAY.
LISTEN, PYOTR-- I HAVE NOT SAID TO YOU ALL THE TRUTH YET.
MY SEARCHING FOR YOU HAS BEEN *TRULY*--
TO WARN ME AWAY FROM YOUR FOOLISH *DAUGHTER?*
AND YOUR *BOOKS OF MAGIC,* AND YOUR *TREASURE?*
YES!
NO!
AND THE *EYE OF THE WORLD.*


I TRUST YOU, SHE SAYS.
LITTLE FINGERS NESTLE INTO THE HOLLOW OF HIS HAND.
IN HELL.
SOMEONE IS BEHIND THEM.
RASPING BREATH.
SCRATCH AND CLATTER OF LEATHER SOLES STUMBLING DOWN IRON STAIRS.
I WON'T LET HIM GET YOU, HE WHISPERS TO HER.
IN HELL.


SOMEWHERE IN THE DARK, THERE IS A WAY OUT.
OR THIS WOULD NOT BE HELL.
HELL IS NOT A STORY IN THE HEAVY BLACK BOOK IN THE ROOM WHERE FATHER TEACHES HIM TO PRAY.
IN HELL, HIS FEAR IS NOT FOR HIMSELF.
HE SHOULD LIFT HER UP AND CARRY HER, THE GIRL WHOSE FACES LOOK UP TO HIS IN TRUST--
KATARINA, ONLY SISTER ONLY FRIEND--
ASTRA, HAUNTED INNOCENT--
GENEVIEVE, ALMOST DAUGHTER--
BUT A COUGH OF A LAUGH BUBBLES OUT OF THE DARK, TOO CLOSE BEHIND.
THIS WAY, HE SAYS.
RUN.


SOMEWHERE IN THE DARK, THERE IS HOPE.
THERE--
HURRY, *HURRY,* JOHN--
OR THIS WOULD NOT BE HELL.
ERIC...
MY NAME IS *ERIC.*
SHE TRUSTED HIM.
IN HELL.
BUT HE DID NOT HOLD HER CLOSE ENOUGH.


PYOTR, MY TOO CLEVER SELF-- DO NOTHING TO REGRET!
ELLIANA WILL BETRAY YOU, IF YOU TAKE FROM THE LESHY THE EYE OF THE WORLD!
YOU WILL BE CURSED WITH SCHEMING GHOSTS IN YOUR HEAD!
ELLIANA BENDS TO MY WILL LIKE A WILLOW. SEE THE SWORD SHE STOLE FROM YOU TO PLEASE ME?
NO! I AM YOUR TRUE FRIEND! I LOVE YOU MORE THAN--
LIFE ITSELF?
THAT IS WELL.
SHIK
I AM ONE DANGEROUS MAN, WHEN YOUNG.
TO SAVE THE WORLD NOW WILL NOT BE EASY.
NEXT: EYES OF THE BLIND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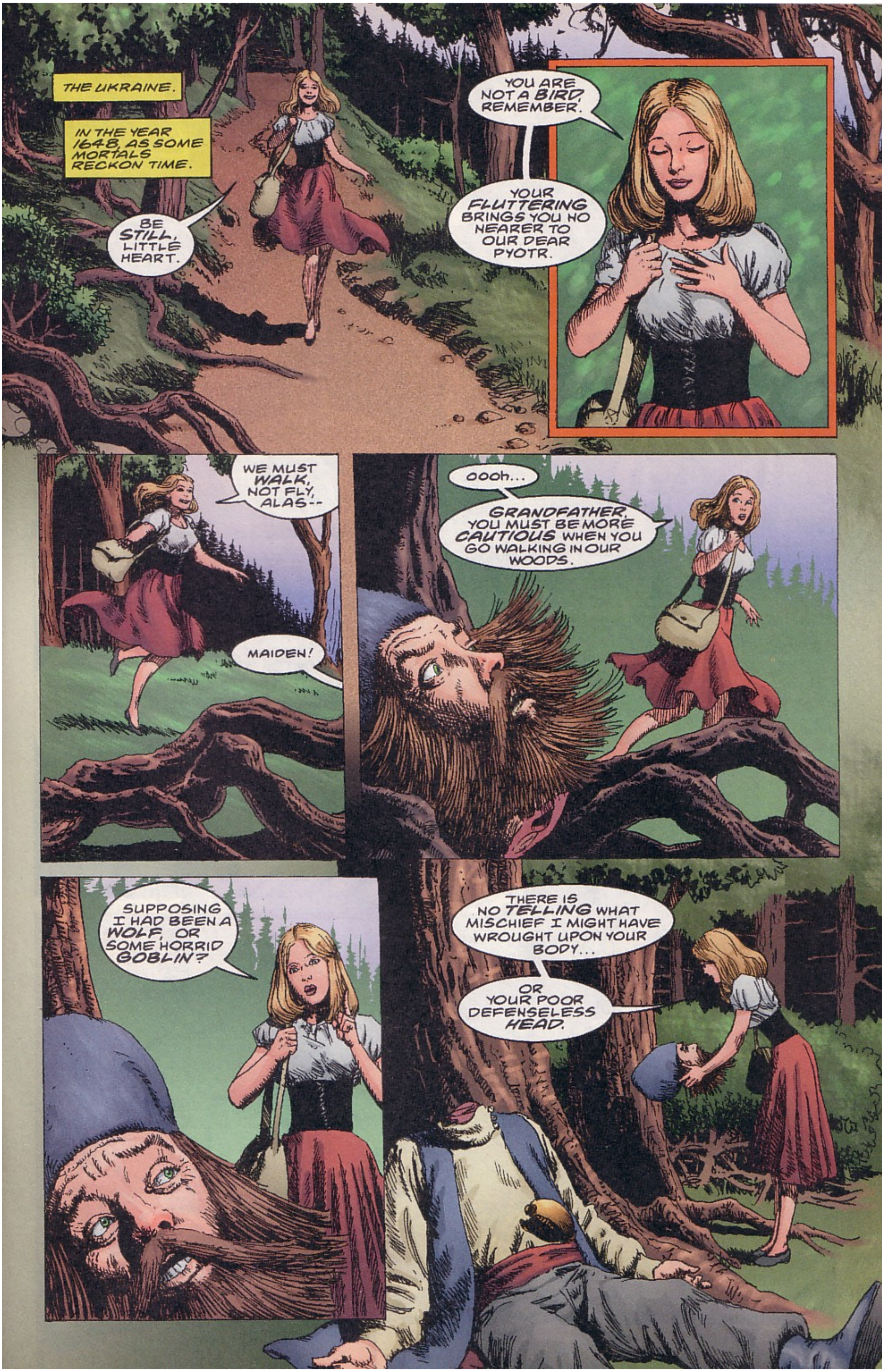
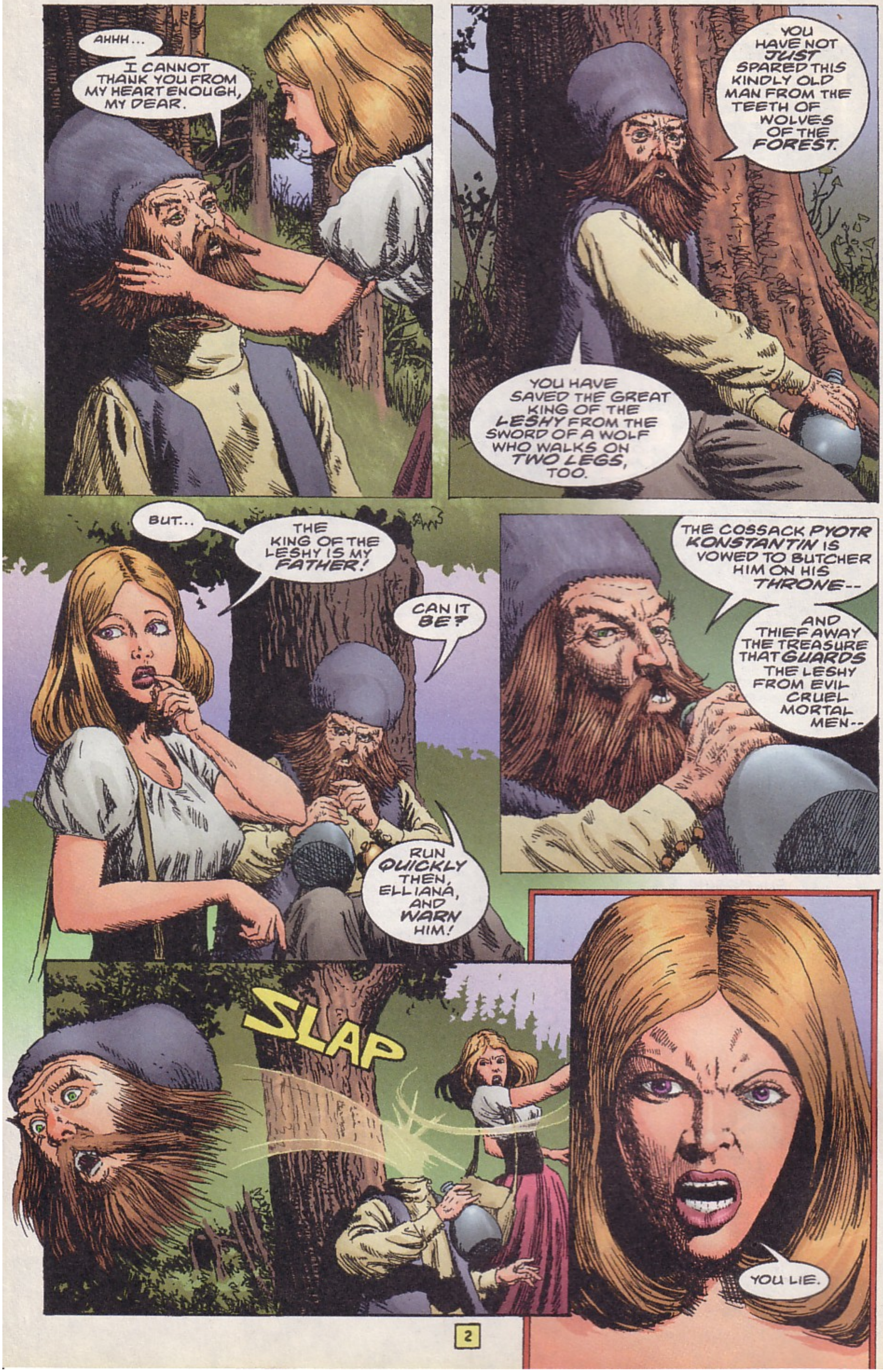
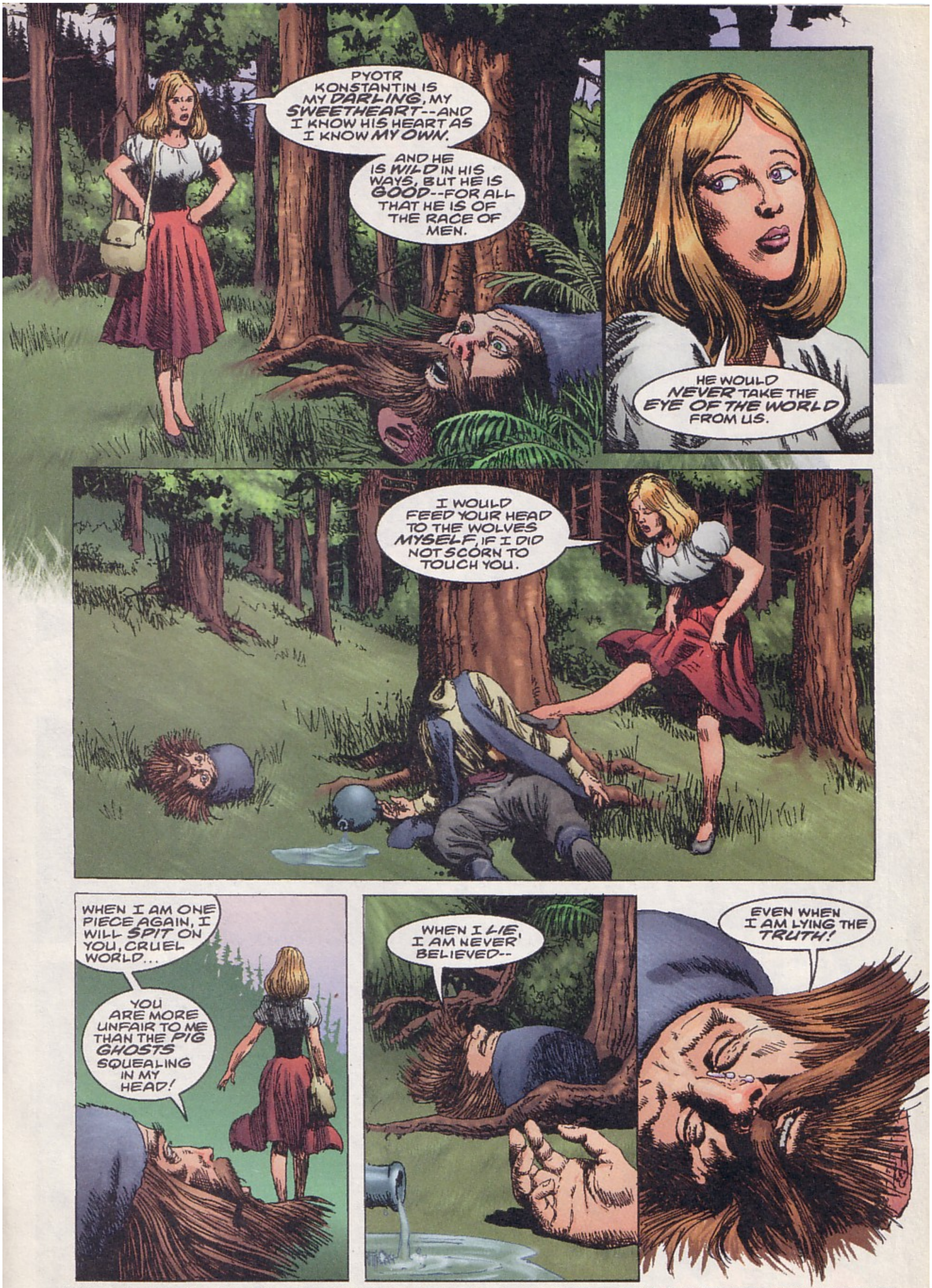

THE UKRAINE.
IN THE YEAR 1648, AS SOME MORTALS RECKON TIME.
BE STILL, LITTLE HEART.
YOU ARE NOT A BIRD, REMEMBER.
YOUR FLUTTERING BRINGS YOU NO NEARER TO OUR DEAR PYOTR.
WE MUST WALK, NOT FLY, ALAS--
MAIDEN!
oooh...
GRANDFATHER, YOU MUST BE MORE CAUTIOUS WHEN YOU GO WALKING IN OUR WOODS.
SUPPOSING I HAD BEEN A WOLF, OR SOME HORRID GOBLIN?
THERE IS NO TELLING WHAT MISCHIEF I MIGHT HAVE WROUGHT UPON YOUR BODY...
OR YOUR POOR DEFENSELESS HEAD.


AHHH...
I CANNOT THANK YOU FROM MY HEART ENOUGH, MY DEAR.
YOU HAVE NOT *JUST* SPARED THIS KINDLY OLD MAN FROM THE TEETH OF WOLVES OF THE *FOREST.*
YOU HAVE SAVED THE GREAT KING OF THE *LESHY* FROM THE SWORD OF A WOLF WHO WALKS ON *TWO LEGS,* TOO.
BUT...
THE KING OF THE LESHY IS MY *FATHER!*
CAN IT *BE?*
RUN *QUICKLY* THEN, ELLIANÁ, AND *WARN* HIM!
THE COSSACK *PYOTR KONSTANTIN* IS VOWED TO BUTCHER HIM ON HIS *THRONE--*
AND THIEF AWAY THE TREASURE THAT *GUARDS* THE LESHY FROM EVIL CRUEL MORTAL MEN--
SLAP
YOU LIE.


PYOTR KONSTANTIN IS MY DARLING, MY SWEETHEART--AND I KNOW HIS HEART AS I KNOW MY OWN.
AND HE IS WILD IN HIS WAYS, BUT HE IS GOOD--FOR ALL THAT HE IS OF THE RACE OF MEN.
HE WOULD NEVER TAKE THE EYE OF THE WORLD FROM US.
I WOULD FEED YOUR HEAD TO THE WOLVES MYSELF, IF I DID NOT SCORN TO TOUCH YOU.
WHEN I AM ONE PIECE AGAIN, I WILL SPIT ON YOU, CRUEL WORLD...
YOU ARE MORE UNFAIR TO ME THAN THE PIG GHOSTS SQUEALING IN MY HEAD!
WHEN I LIE, I AM NEVER BELIEVED--
EVEN WHEN I AM LYING THE TRUTH!

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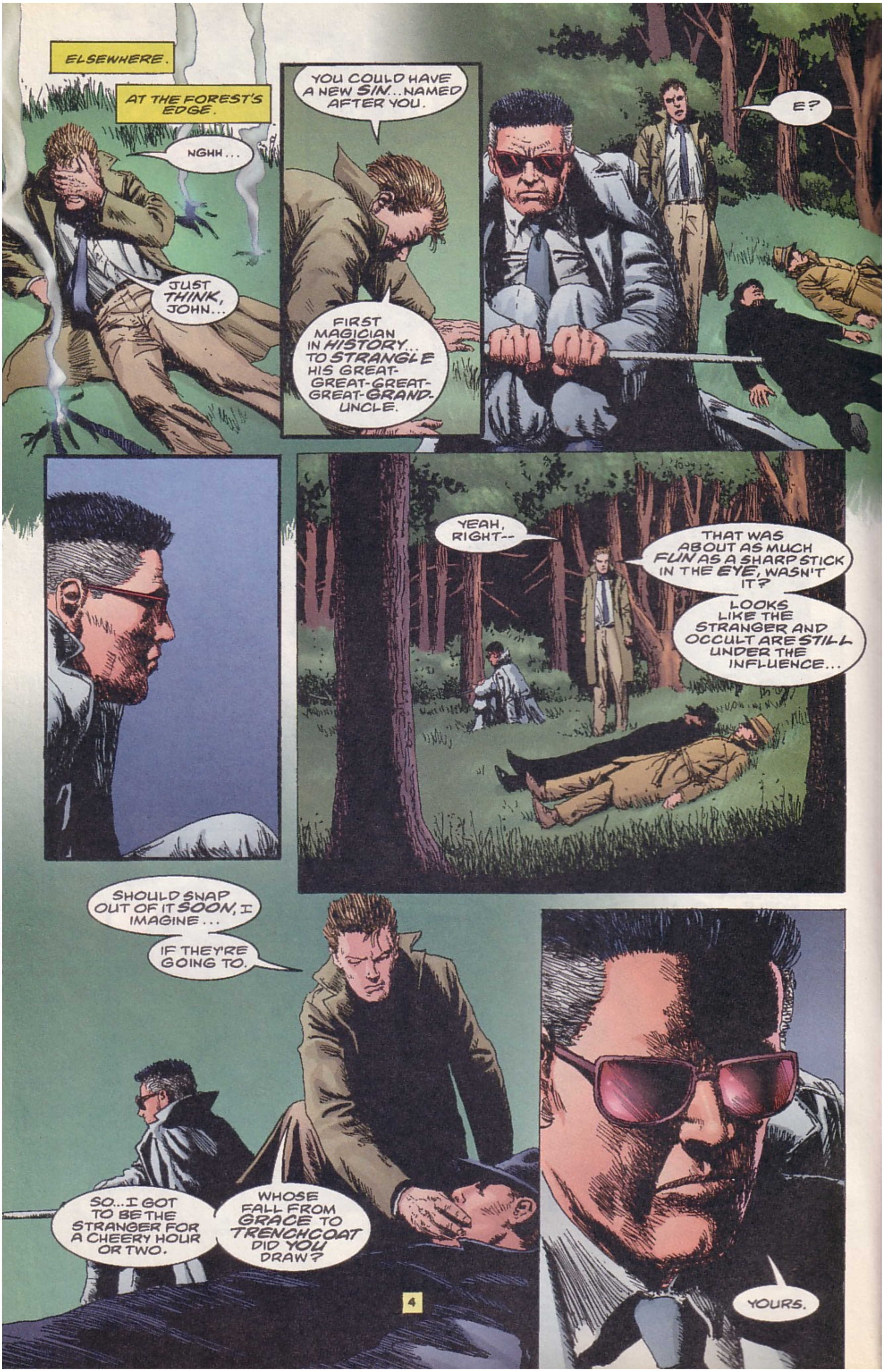
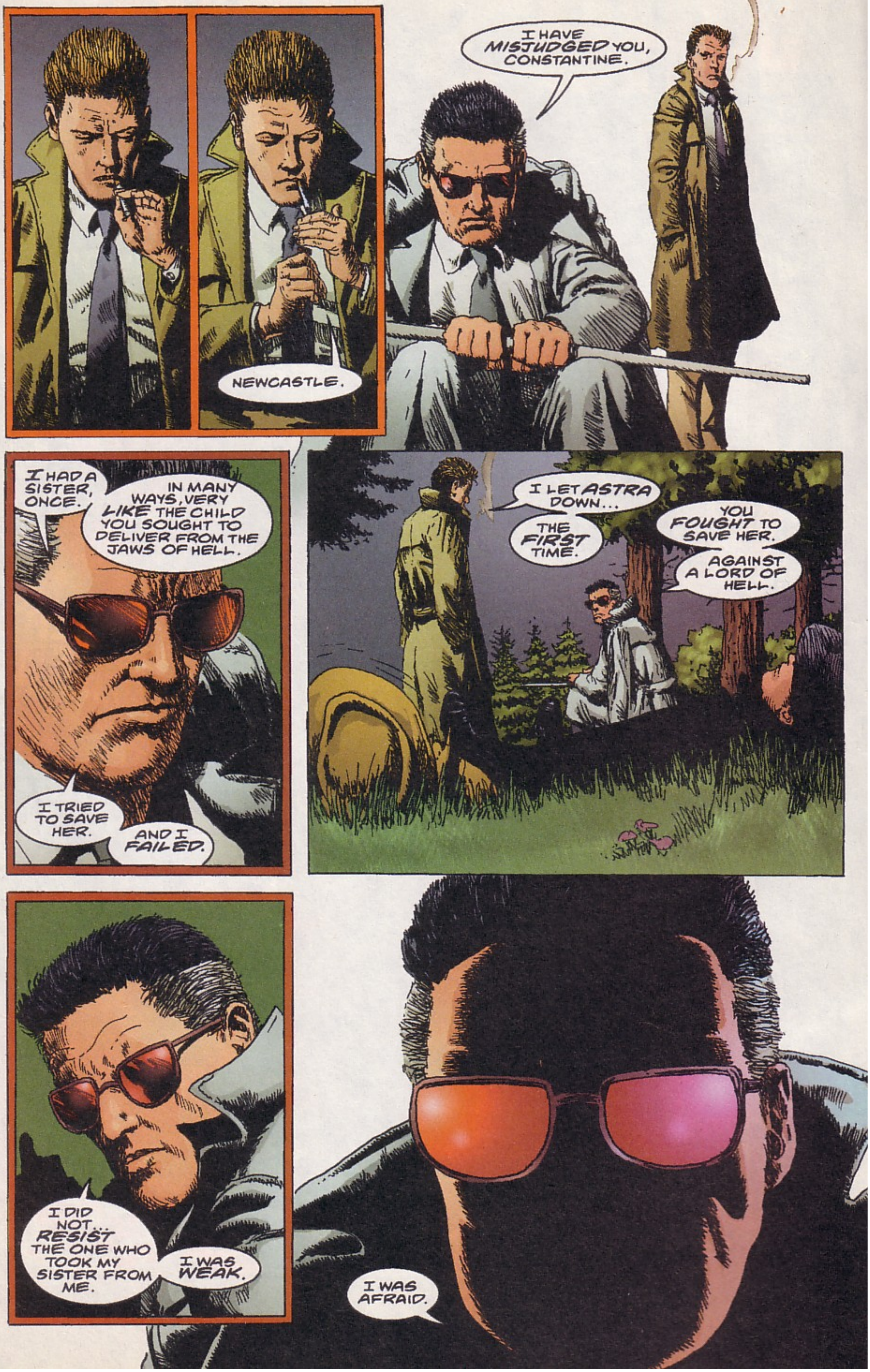
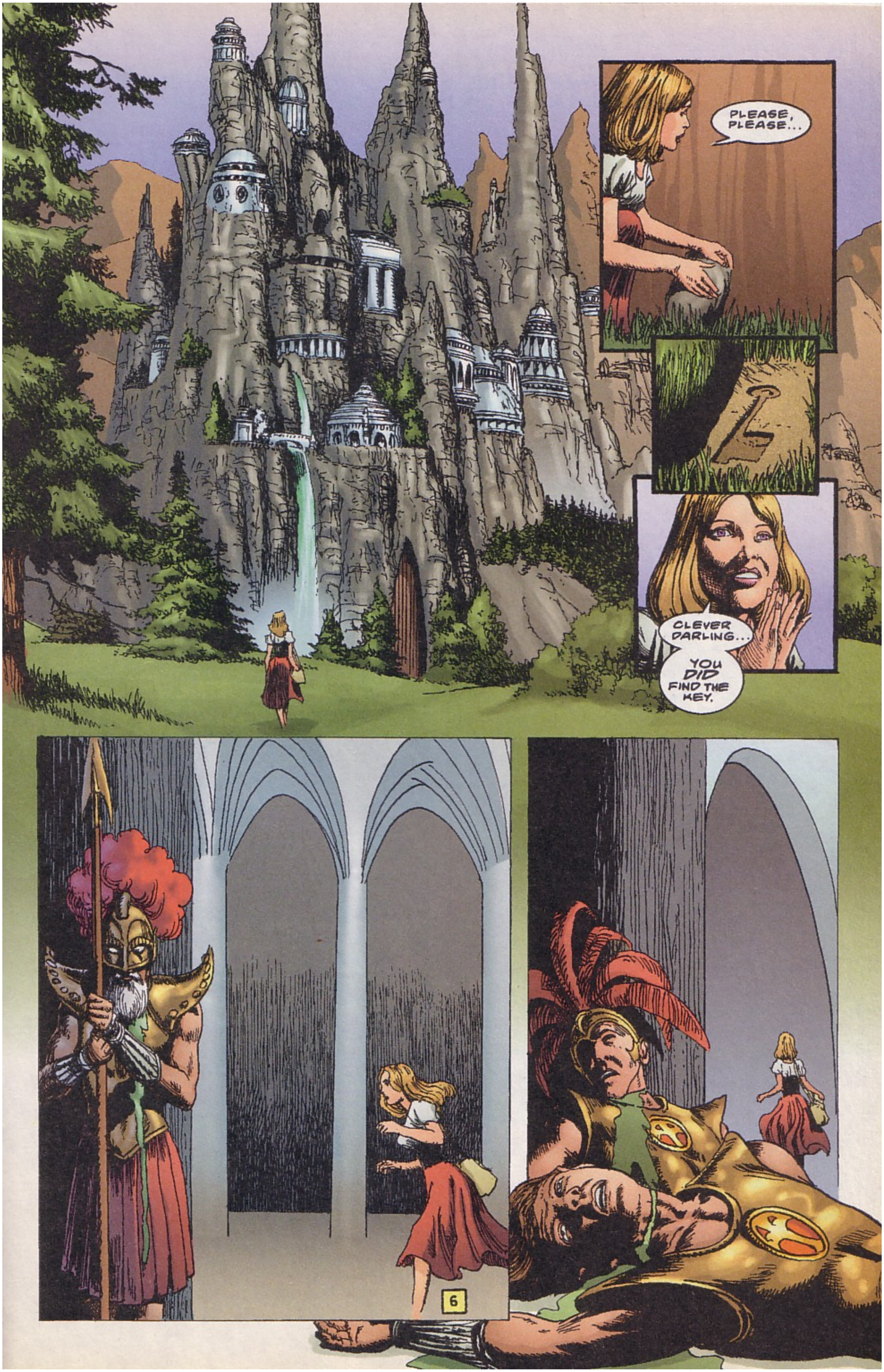
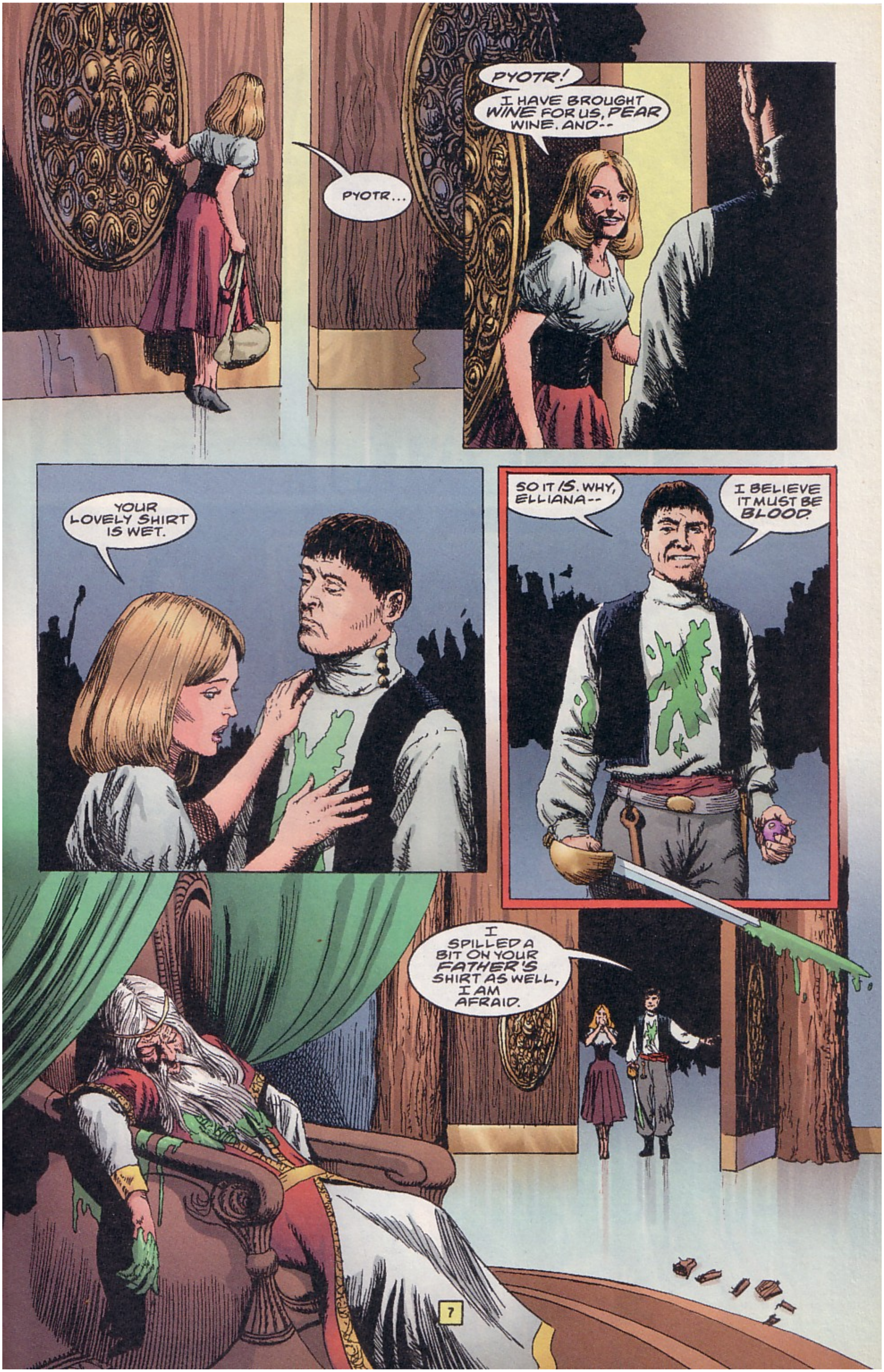
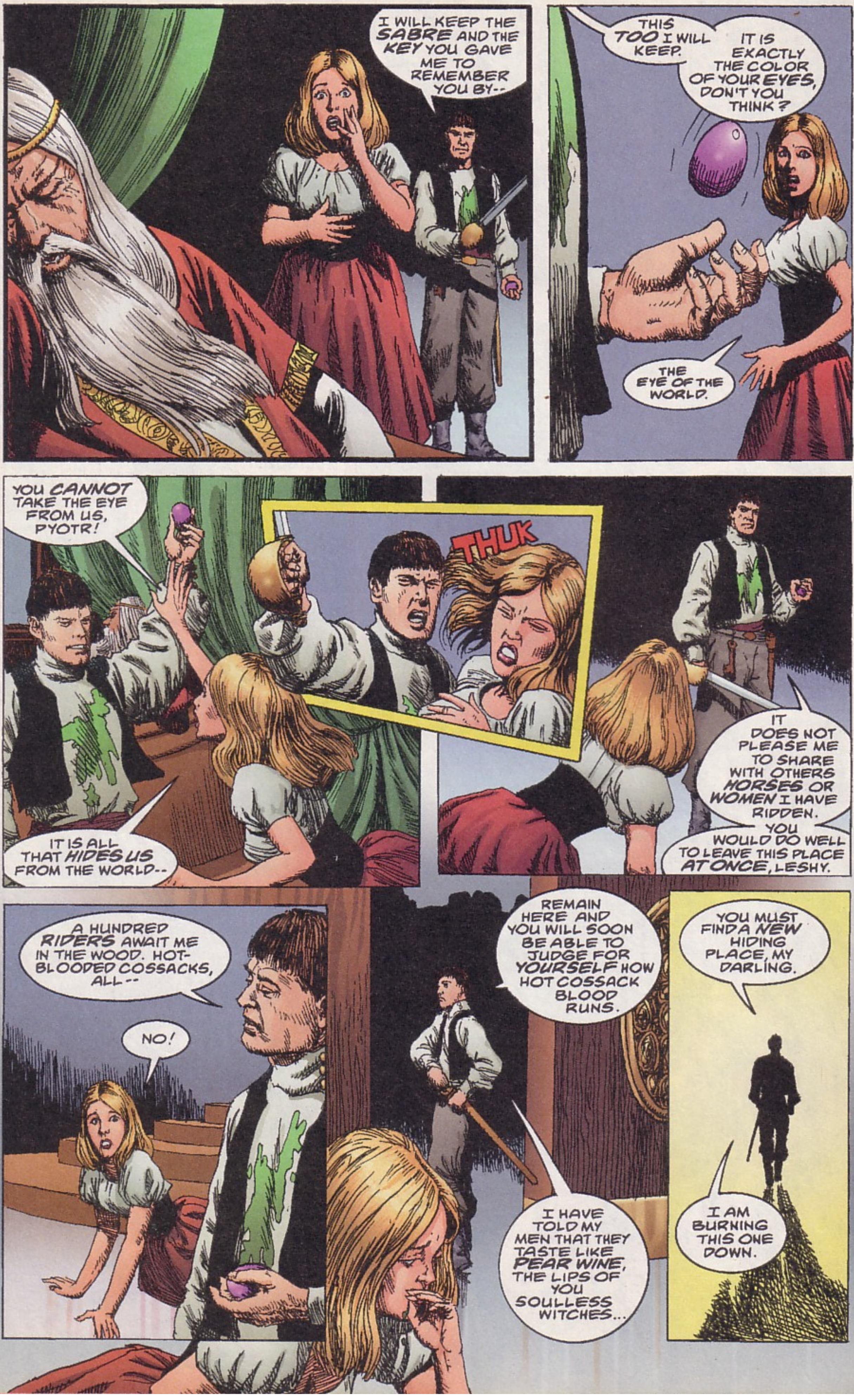
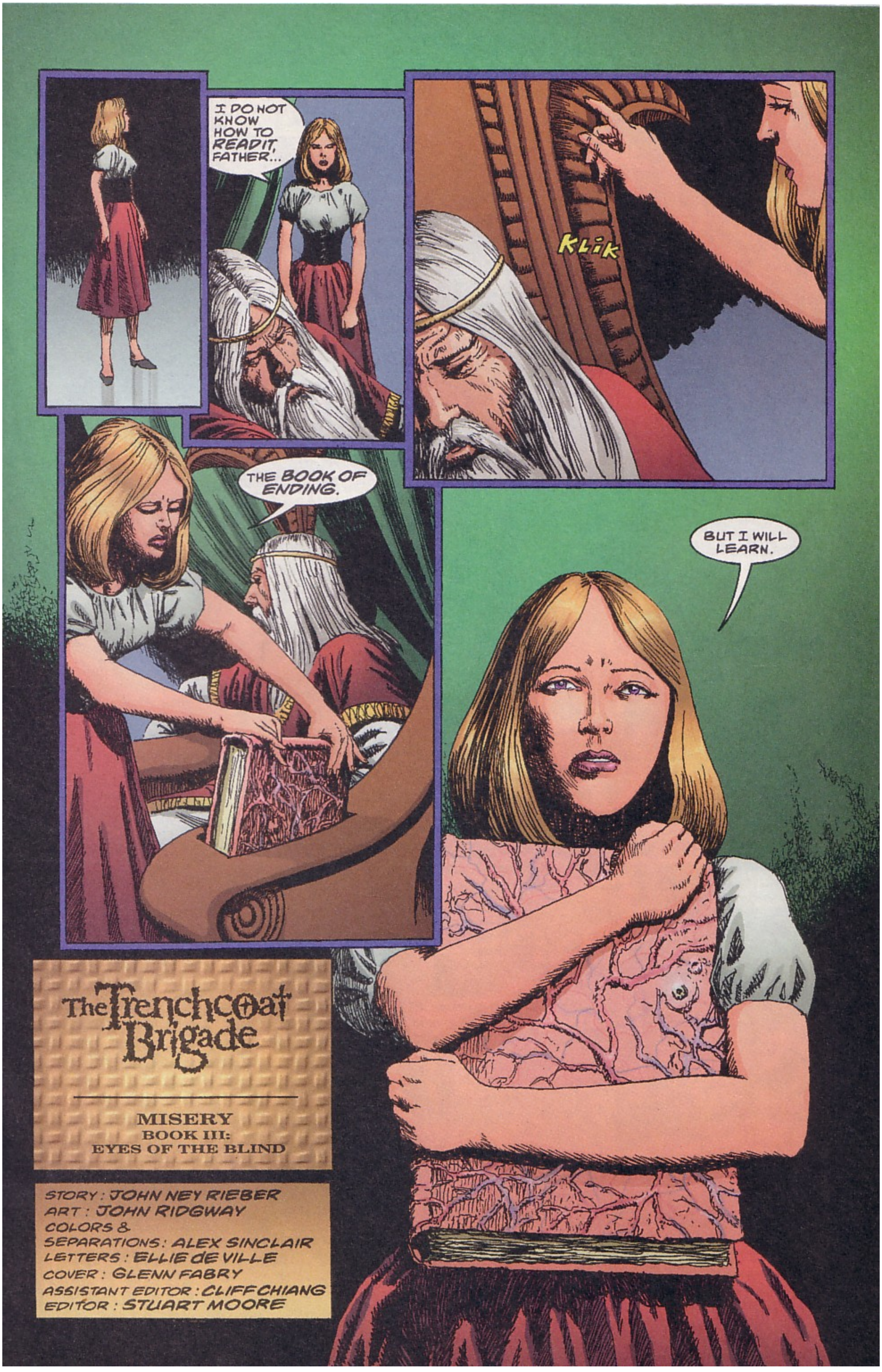

ELSEWHERE.
AT THE FOREST'S EDGE.
NGHH...
JUST THINK, JOHN...
YOU COULD HAVE A NEW SIN...NAMED AFTER YOU.
FIRST MAGICIAN IN HISTORY... TO STRANGLE HIS GREAT-GREAT-GREAT-GREAT-GREAT-GRAND-UNCLE.
E?
YEAH, RIGHT--
THAT WAS ABOUT AS MUCH FUN AS A SHARP STICK IN THE EYE, WASN'T IT?
LOOKS LIKE THE STRANGER AND OCCULT ARE STILL UNDER THE INFLUENCE...
SHOULD SNAP OUT OF IT SOON, I IMAGINE...
IF THEY'RE GOING TO.
SO...I GOT TO BE THE STRANGER FOR A CHEERY HOUR OR TWO.
WHOSE FALL FROM GRACE TO TRENCHCOAT DID YOU DRAW?
YOURS.


NEWCASTLE.
I HAVE *MISJUDGED* YOU, CONSTANTINE.
I HAD A SISTER, ONCE.
IN MANY WAYS, VERY *LIKE* THE CHILD YOU SOUGHT TO DELIVER FROM THE JAWS OF HELL.
I TRIED TO SAVE HER.
AND I *FAILED*.
I LET *ASTRA* DOWN...
THE *FIRST* TIME.
YOU *FOUGHT* TO SAVE HER.
AGAINST A LORD OF HELL.
I DID NOT... *RESIST* THE ONE WHO TOOK MY SISTER FROM ME.
I WAS *WEAK*.
I WAS AFRAID.


PLEASE, PLEASE...
CLEVER DARLING...
YOU *DID* FIND THE KEY.


PYOTR...
PYOTR! I HAVE BROUGHT WINE FOR US, PEAR WINE. AND--
YOUR LOVELY SHIRT IS WET.
SO IT IS. WHY, ELLIANA--
I BELIEVE IT MUST BE BLOOD.
I SPILLED A BIT ON YOUR FATHER'S SHIRT AS WELL, I AM AFRAID.


I WILL KEEP THE SABRE AND THE KEY YOU GAVE ME TO REMEMBER YOU BY--
THIS TOO I WILL KEEP.
IT IS EXACTLY THE COLOR OF YOUR EYES, DON'T YOU THINK?
THE EYE OF THE WORLD.
YOU CANNOT TAKE THE EYE FROM US, PYOTR!
IT IS ALL THAT HIDES US FROM THE WORLD--
THUK
IT DOES NOT PLEASE ME TO SHARE WITH OTHERS HORSES OR WOMEN I HAVE RIDDEN.
YOU WOULD DO WELL TO LEAVE THIS PLACE AT ONCE, LESHY.
A HUNDRED RIDERS AWAIT ME IN THE WOOD. HOT-BLOODED COSSACKS, ALL--
NO!
REMAIN HERE AND YOU WILL SOON BE ABLE TO JUDGE FOR YOURSELF HOW HOT COSSACK BLOOD RUNS.
I HAVE TOLD MY MEN THAT THEY TASTE LIKE PEAR WINE, THE LIPS OF YOU SOULLESS WITCHES...
YOU MUST FIND A NEW HIDING PLACE, MY DARLING.
I AM BURNING THIS ONE DOWN.


I DO NOT KNOW HOW TO *READ IT*, FATHER...
KLIK
THE *BOOK OF ENDING.*
BUT I WILL LEARN.

The Trenchcoat Brigade

MISERY

BOOK III: EYES OF THE BLIND

STORY : JOHN NEY RIEBER
ART : JOHN RIDGWAY
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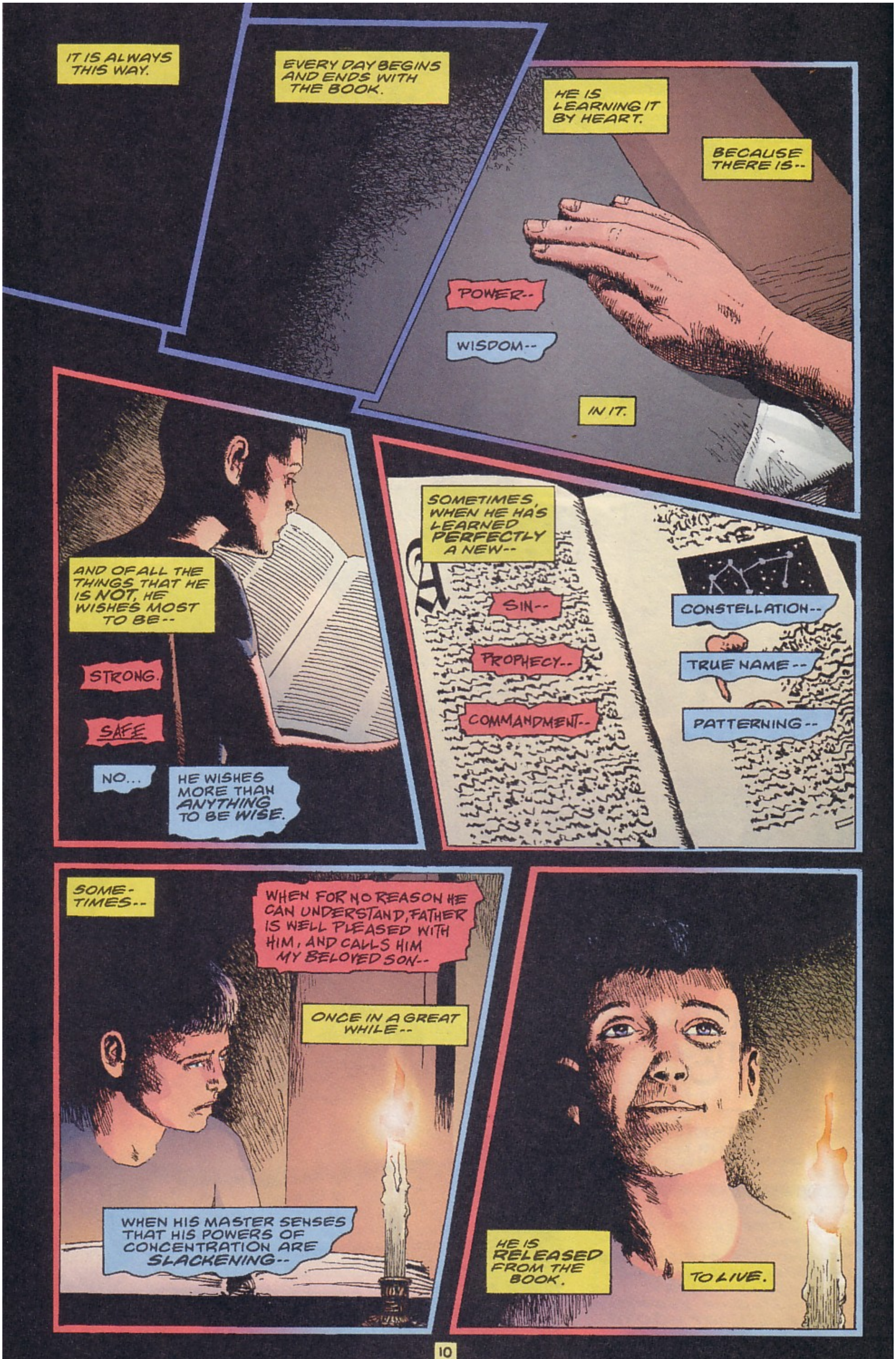
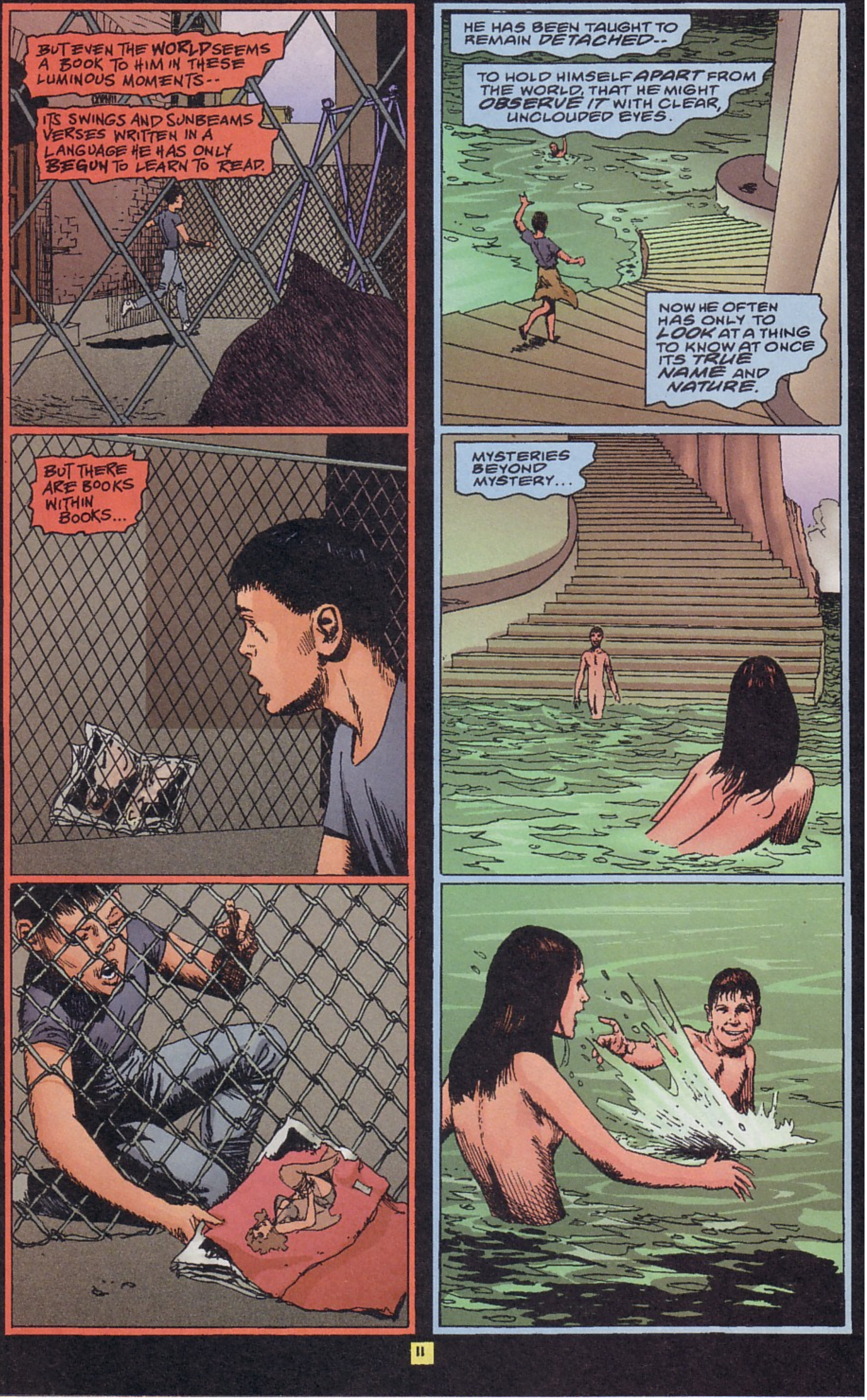
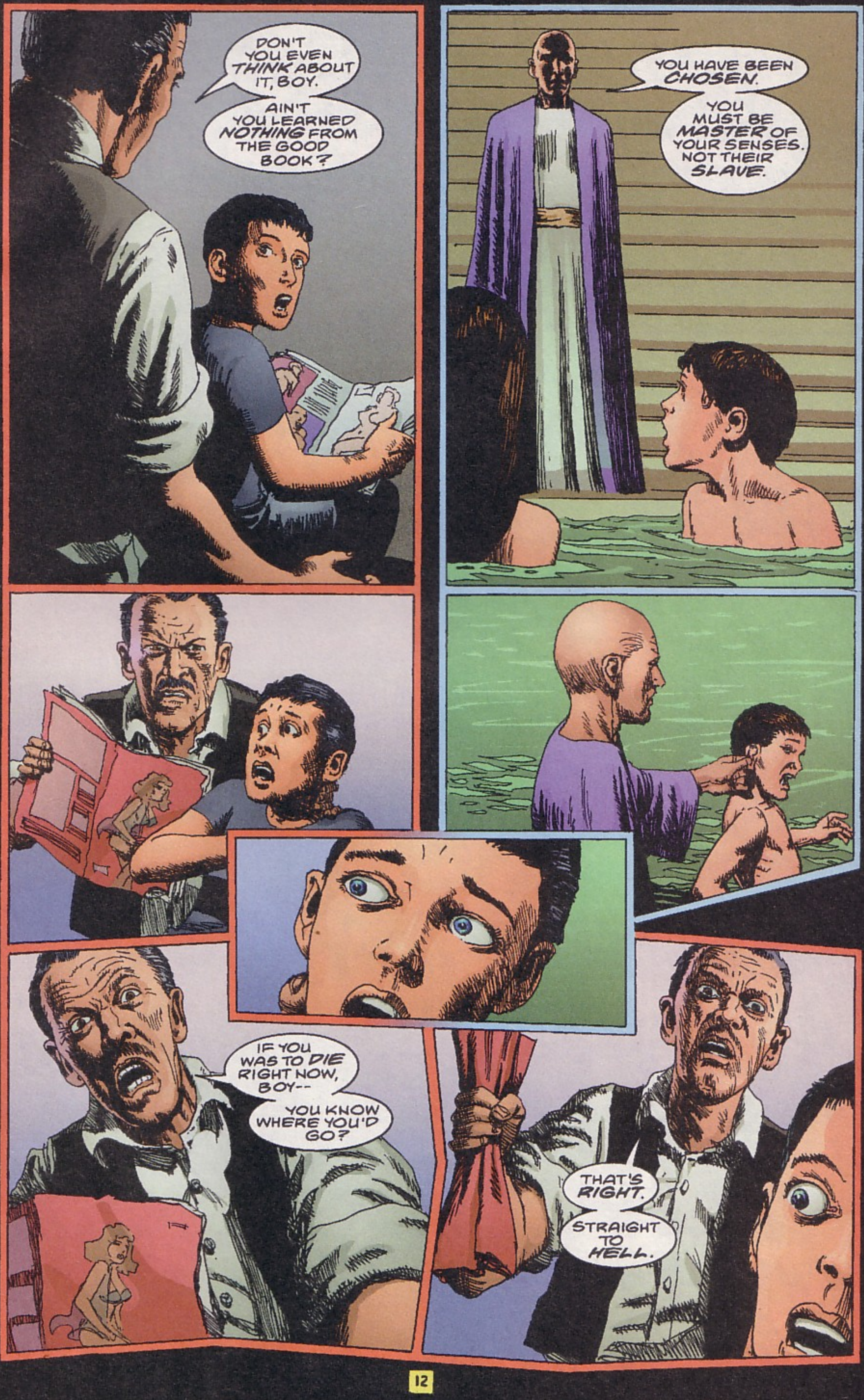
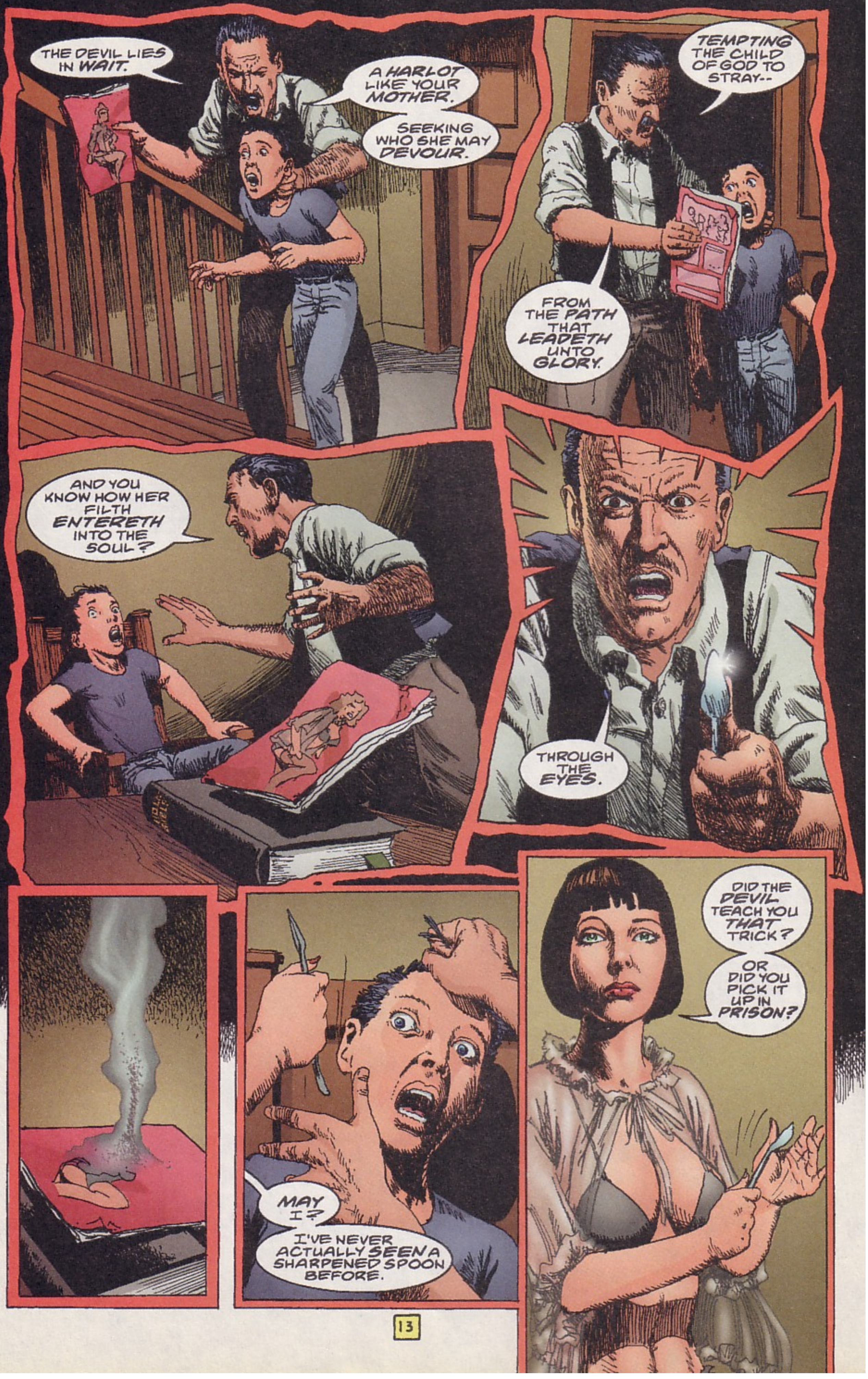
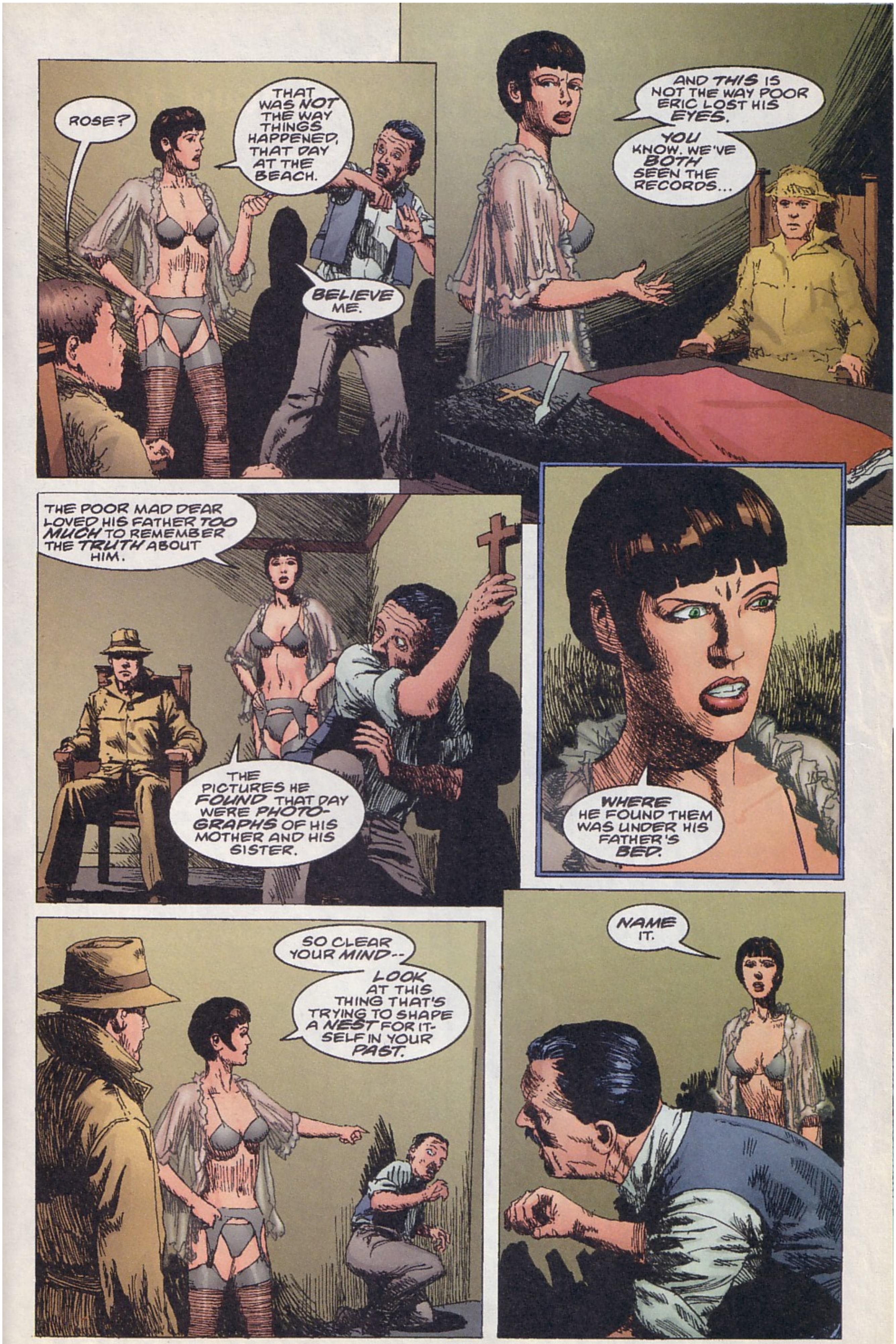
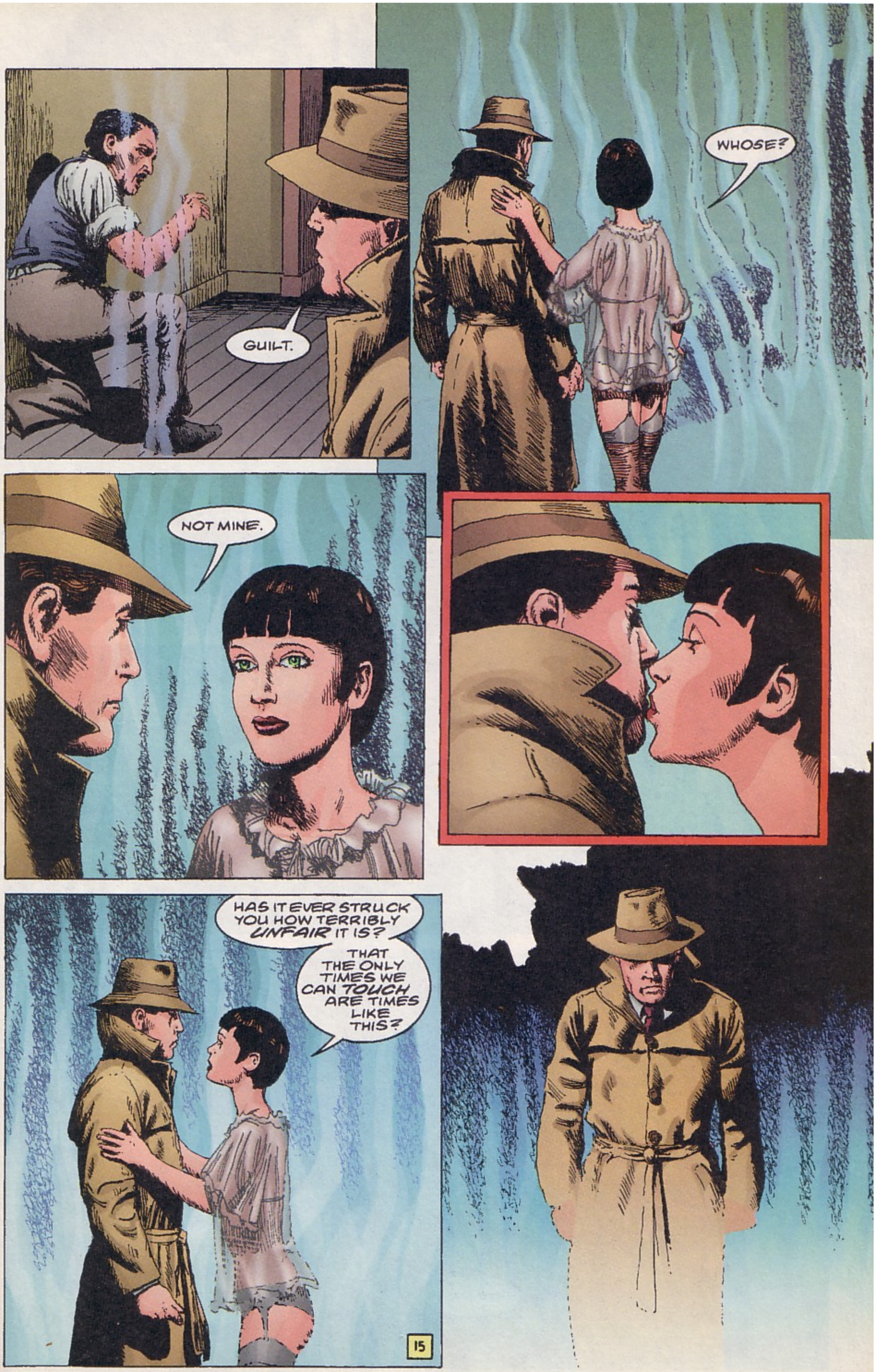

IT IS ALWAYS THIS WAY.
EVERY DAY BEGINS AND ENDS WITH THE BOOK.
HE IS LEARNING IT BY HEART.
BECAUSE THERE IS--
POWER--
WISDOM--
IN IT.
AND OF ALL THE THINGS THAT HE IS *NOT*, HE WISHES MOST TO BE--
STRONG.
SAFE
NO...
HE WISHES MORE THAN *ANYTHING* TO BE *WISE*.
SOMETIMES, WHEN HE HAS LEARNED *PERFECTLY* A NEW--
SIN--
PROPHECY--
COMMANDMENT--
CONSTELLATION--
TRUE NAME--
PATTERNING--
SOME-TIMES--
WHEN FOR NO REASON HE CAN UNDERSTAND, FATHER IS WELL PLEASED WITH HIM, AND CALLS HIM *MY BELOVED SON*--
ONCE IN A GREAT WHILE--
WHEN HIS MASTER SENSES THAT HIS POWERS OF CONCENTRATION ARE *SLACKENING*--
HE IS *RELEASED* FROM THE BOOK.
TO *LIVE*.

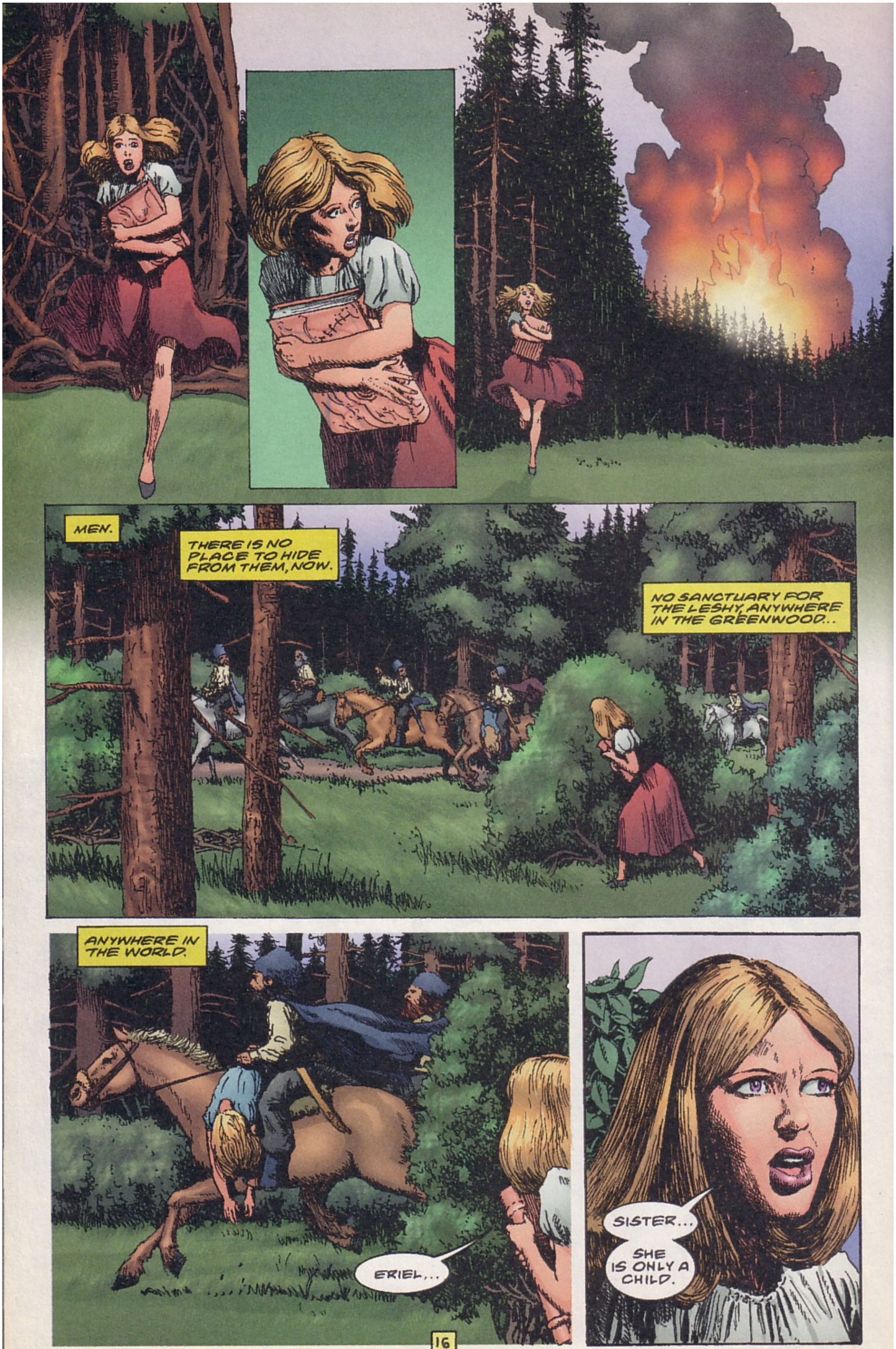

BUT EVEN THE WORLD SEEMS A BOOK TO HIM IN THESE LUMINOUS MOMENTS--
ITS SWINGS AND SUNBEAMS VERSES WRITTEN IN A LANGUAGE HE HAS ONLY BEGUN TO LEARN TO READ.
BUT THERE ARE BOOKS WITHIN BOOKS...
HE HAS BEEN TAUGHT TO REMAIN DETACHED--
TO HOLD HIMSELF APART FROM THE WORLD, THAT HE MIGHT OBSERVE IT WITH CLEAR, UNCLOUDED EYES.
NOW HE OFTEN HAS ONLY TO LOOK AT A THING TO KNOW AT ONCE ITS TRUE NAME AND NATURE.
MYSTERIES BEYOND MYSTERY...

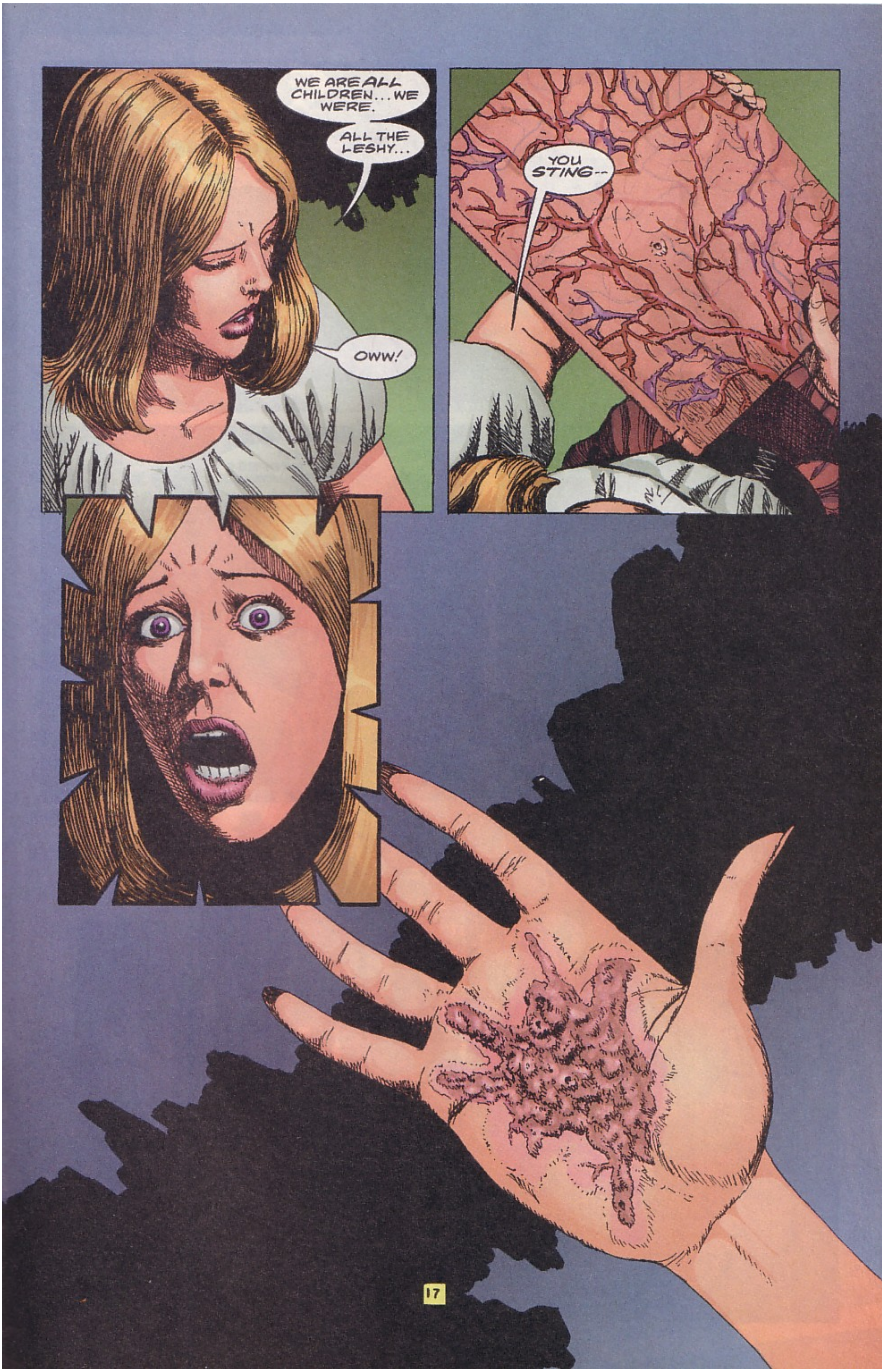

DON'T YOU EVEN THINK ABOUT IT, BOY.
AIN'T YOU LEARNED NOTHING FROM THE GOOD BOOK?
YOU HAVE BEEN CHOSEN.
YOU MUST BE MASTER OF YOUR SENSES. NOT THEIR SLAVE.
IF YOU WAS TO DIE RIGHT NOW, BOY--
YOU KNOW WHERE YOU'D GO?
THAT'S RIGHT.
STRAIGHT TO HELL.

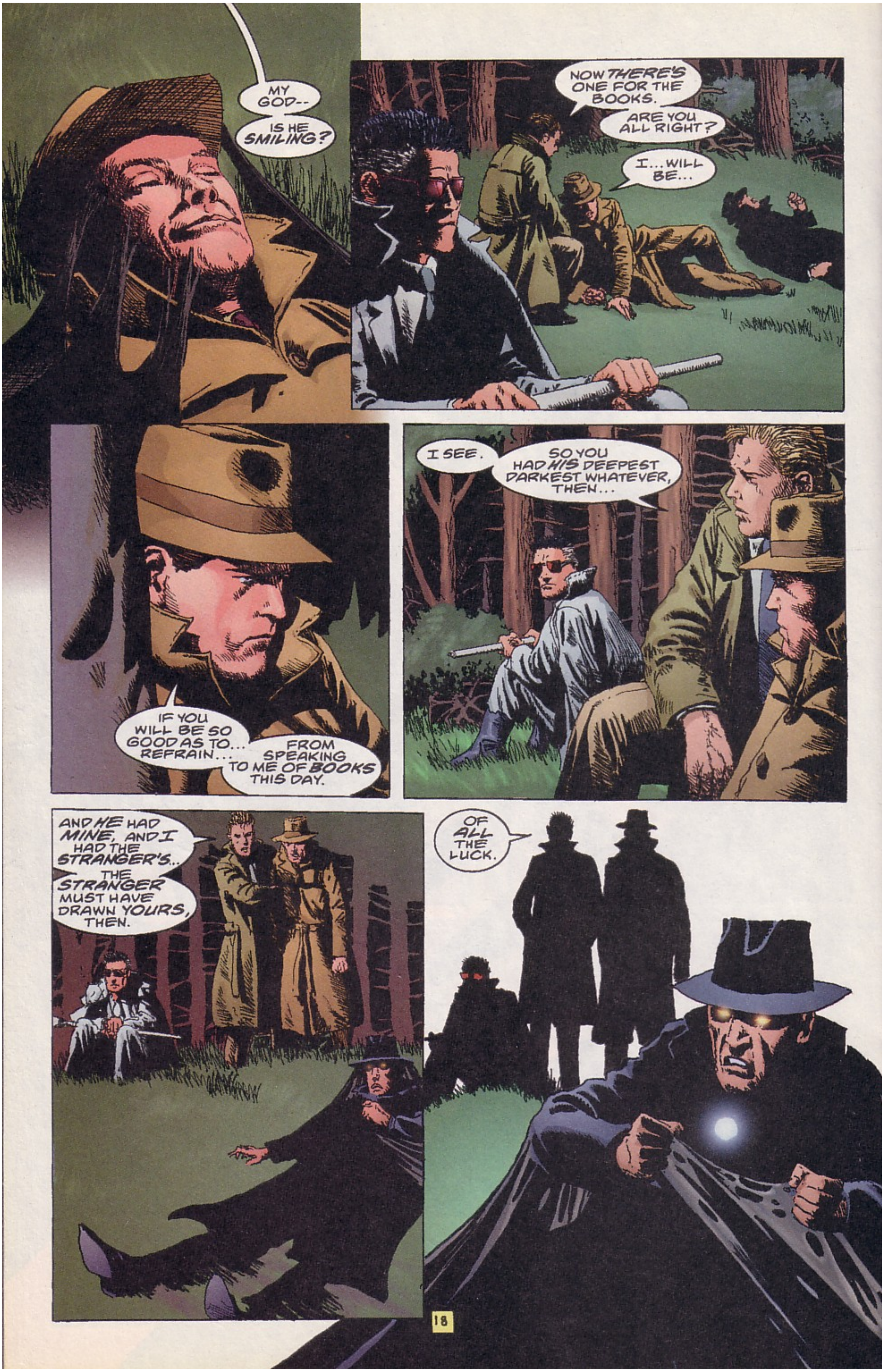

THE DEVIL LIES IN *WAIT*.
A *HARLOT* LIKE YOUR *MOTHER*.
SEEKING WHO SHE MAY *DEVOUR*.
TEMPTING THE CHILD OF GOD TO STRAY--
FROM THE *PATH* THAT *LEADETH* UNTO *GLORY*.
AND YOU KNOW HOW HER FILTH *ENTERETH* INTO THE SOUL?
THROUGH THE *EYES*.
MAY I?
I'VE NEVER ACTUALLY *SEEN* A SHARPENED SPOON BEFORE.
DID THE *DEVIL* TEACH YOU *THAT* TRICK?
OR DID YOU PICK IT UP IN *PRISON*?

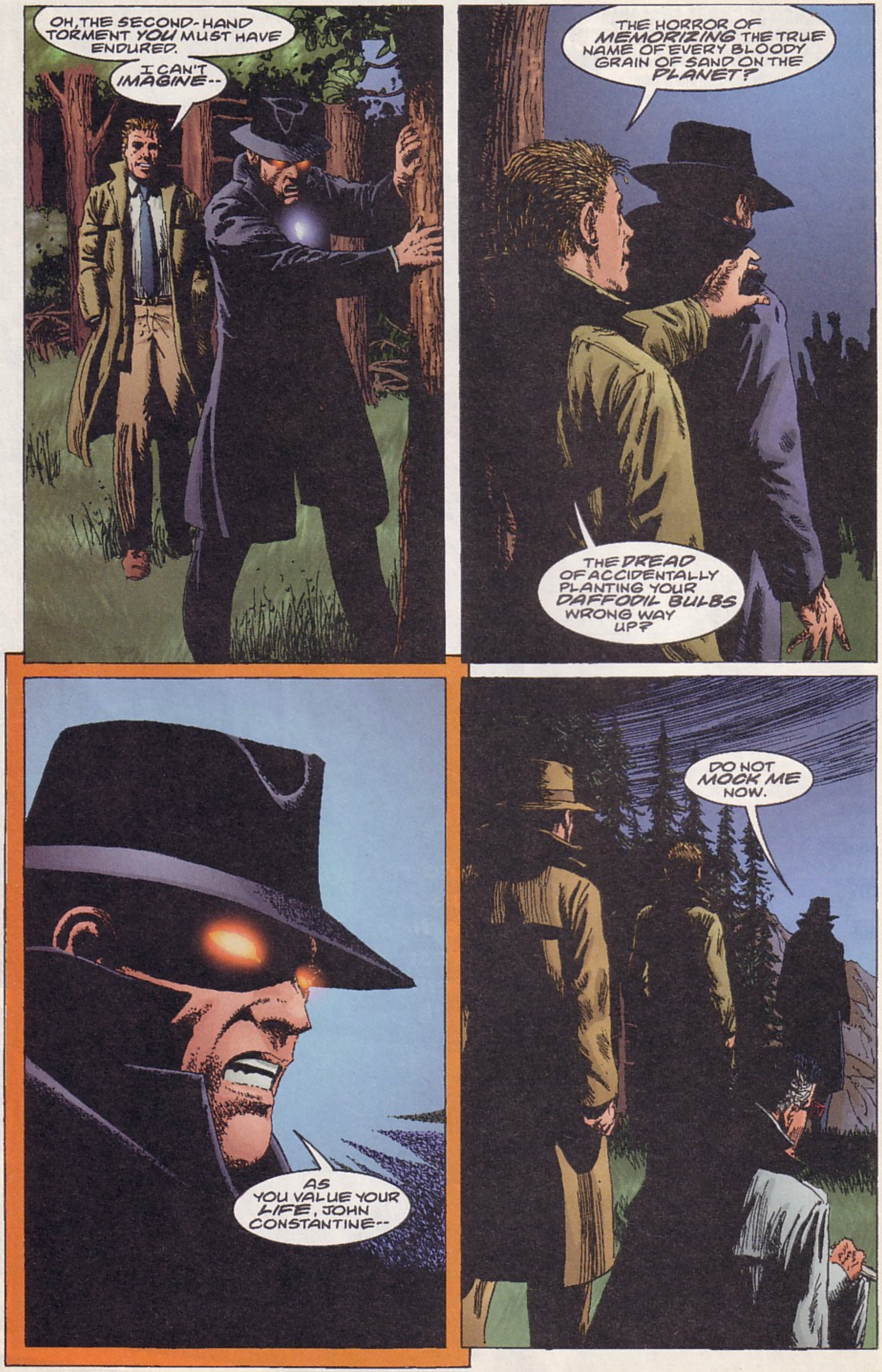

ROSE?
THAT WAS *NOT* THE WAY THINGS HAPPENED, THAT DAY AT THE BEACH.
BELIEVE ME.
AND *THIS* IS NOT THE WAY POOR ERIC LOST HIS *EYES.*
YOU KNOW. WE'VE *BOTH* SEEN THE RECORDS...
THE POOR MAD DEAR LOVED HIS FATHER *TOO MUCH* TO REMEMBER THE *TRUTH* ABOUT HIM.
THE PICTURES HE *FOUND* THAT DAY WERE *PHOTOGRAPHS* OF HIS MOTHER AND HIS SISTER.
WHERE HE FOUND THEM WAS UNDER HIS FATHER'S *BED.*
SO CLEAR YOUR *MIND*--
LOOK AT THIS THING THAT'S TRYING TO SHAPE A *NEST* FOR ITSELF IN YOUR *PAST.*
NAME IT.

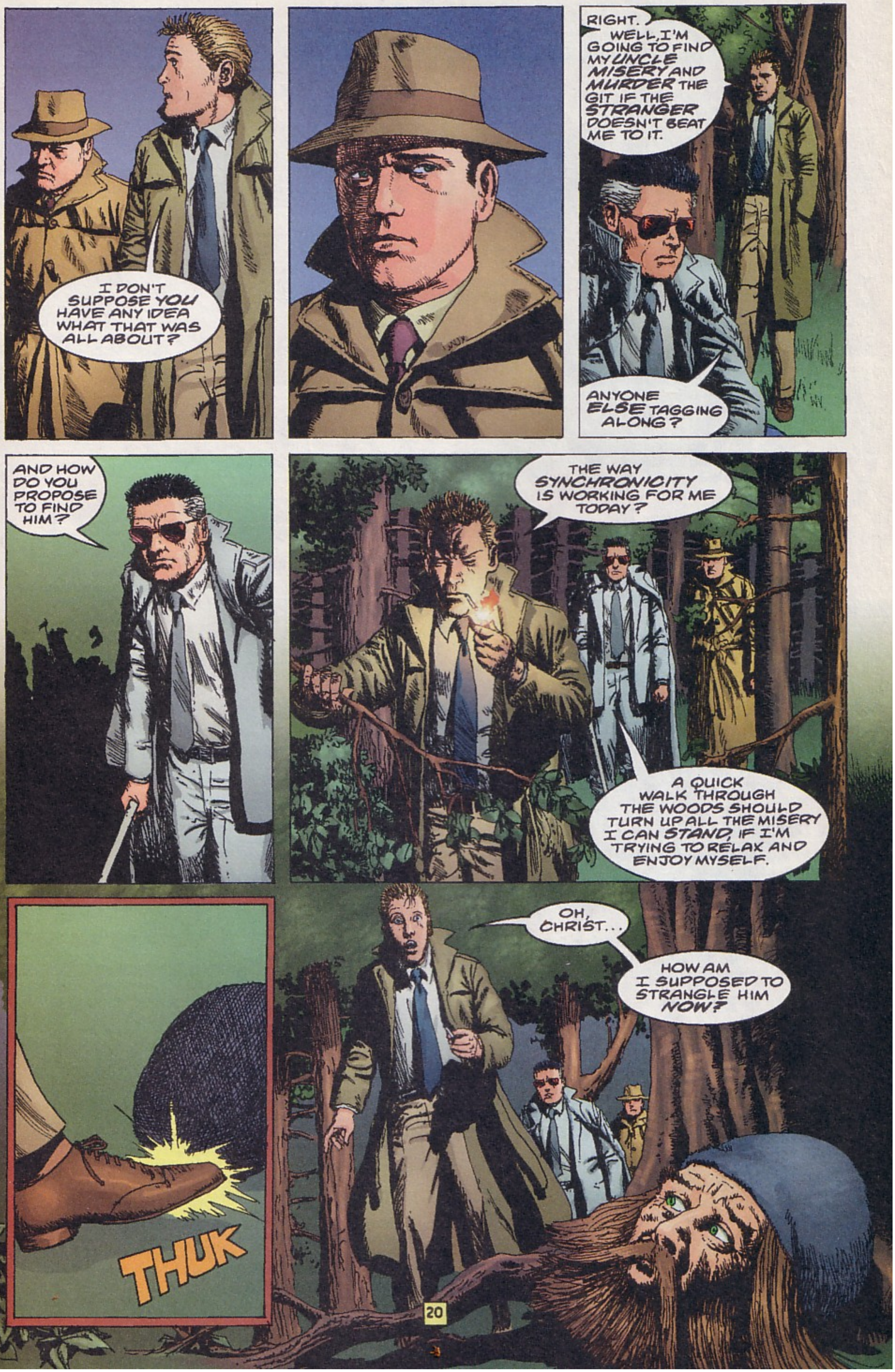

GUILT.
WHOSE?
NOT MINE.
HAS IT EVER STRUCK YOU HOW TERRIBLY *UNFAIR* IT IS?
THAT THE ONLY TIMES WE CAN *TOUCH* ARE TIMES LIKE THIS?
15

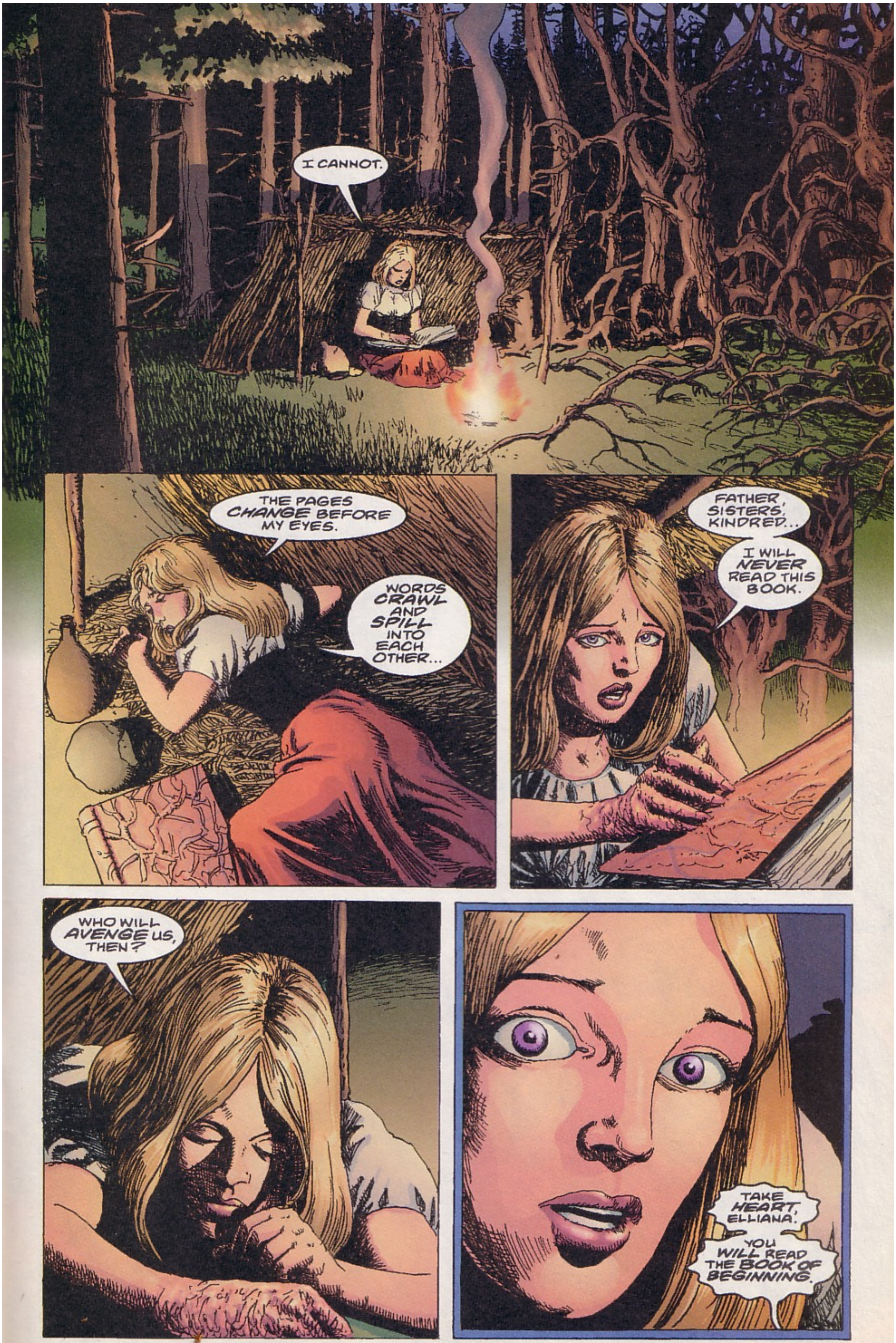

MEN.
THERE IS NO PLACE TO HIDE FROM THEM, NOW.
NO SANCTUARY FOR THE LESHY, ANYWHERE IN THE GREENWOOD...
ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD.
ERIEL...
SISTER...
SHE IS ONLY A CHILD.

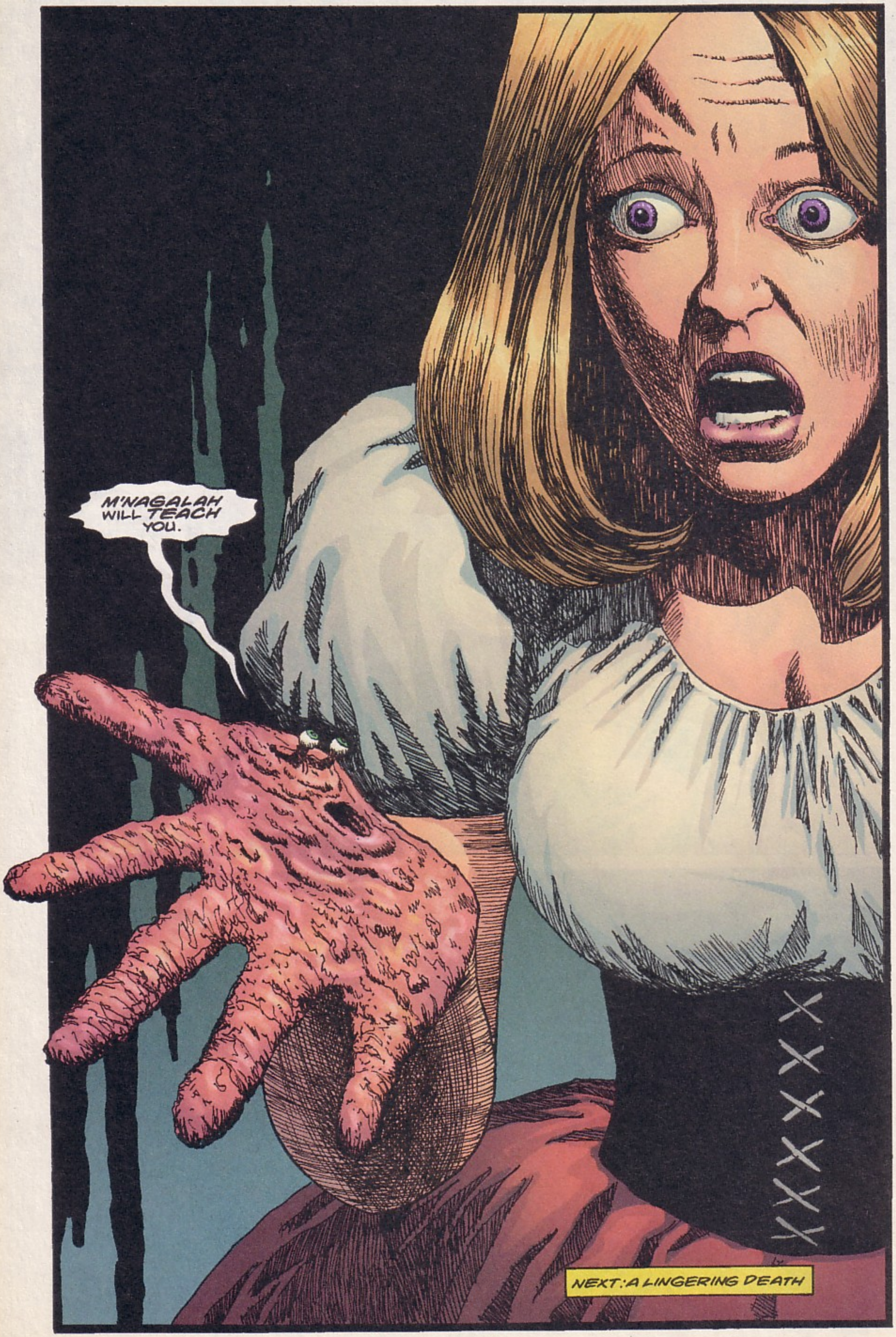

WE ARE ALL CHILDREN... WE WERE.
ALL THE LESHY...
OWW!
YOU STING--


MY GOD-- IS HE *SMILING?*
NOW *THERE'S* ONE FOR THE BOOKS.
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
I... WILL BE...
IF YOU WILL BE SO GOOD AS TO... REFRAIN...
FROM SPEAKING TO ME OF *BOOKS* THIS DAY.
I SEE.
SO YOU HAD *HIS* DEEPEST DARKEST WHATEVER, THEN...
AND *HE* HAD *MINE*, AND *I* HAD THE *STRANGER'S*..
THE *STRANGER* MUST HAVE DRAWN *YOURS*, THEN.
OF *ALL* THE LUCK.


OH, THE SECOND-HAND TORMENT *YOU* MUST HAVE ENDURED.
I CAN'T *IMAGINE*--
THE HORROR OF *MEMORIZING* THE TRUE NAME OF EVERY BLOODY GRAIN OF SAND ON THE *PLANET?*
THE *DREAD* OF ACCIDENTALLY PLANTING YOUR *DAFFODIL BULBS* WRONG WAY UP?
AS YOU VALUE YOUR *LIFE*, JOHN CONSTANTINE--
DO NOT *MOCK ME* NOW.


I DON'T SUPPOSE *YOU* HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT THAT WAS ALL ABOUT?
RIGHT.
WELL, I'M GOING TO FIND MY *UNCLE MISERY* AND *MURDER* THE GIT IF THE *STRANGER* DOESN'T BEAT ME TO IT.
ANYONE *ELSE* TAGGING ALONG?
AND HOW DO YOU PROPOSE TO FIND HIM?
THE WAY *SYNCHRONICITY* IS WORKING FOR ME TODAY?
A QUICK WALK THROUGH THE WOODS SHOULD TURN UP ALL THE MISERY I CAN *STAND*, IF I'M TRYING TO RELAX AND ENJOY MYSELF.
THUK
OH, CHRIST...
HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO STRANGLE HIM *NOW?*


I CANNOT.
THE PAGES CHANGE BEFORE MY EYES.
WORDS CRAWL AND SPILL INTO EACH OTHER...
FATHER, SISTERS, KINDRED...
I WILL NEVER READ THIS BOOK.
WHO WILL AVENGE US, THEN?
TAKE HEART, ELLIANA.
YOU WILL READ THE BOOK OF BEGINNING.


M'NAGALAH WILL *TEACH* YOU.
NEXT: A LINGERING DEATH

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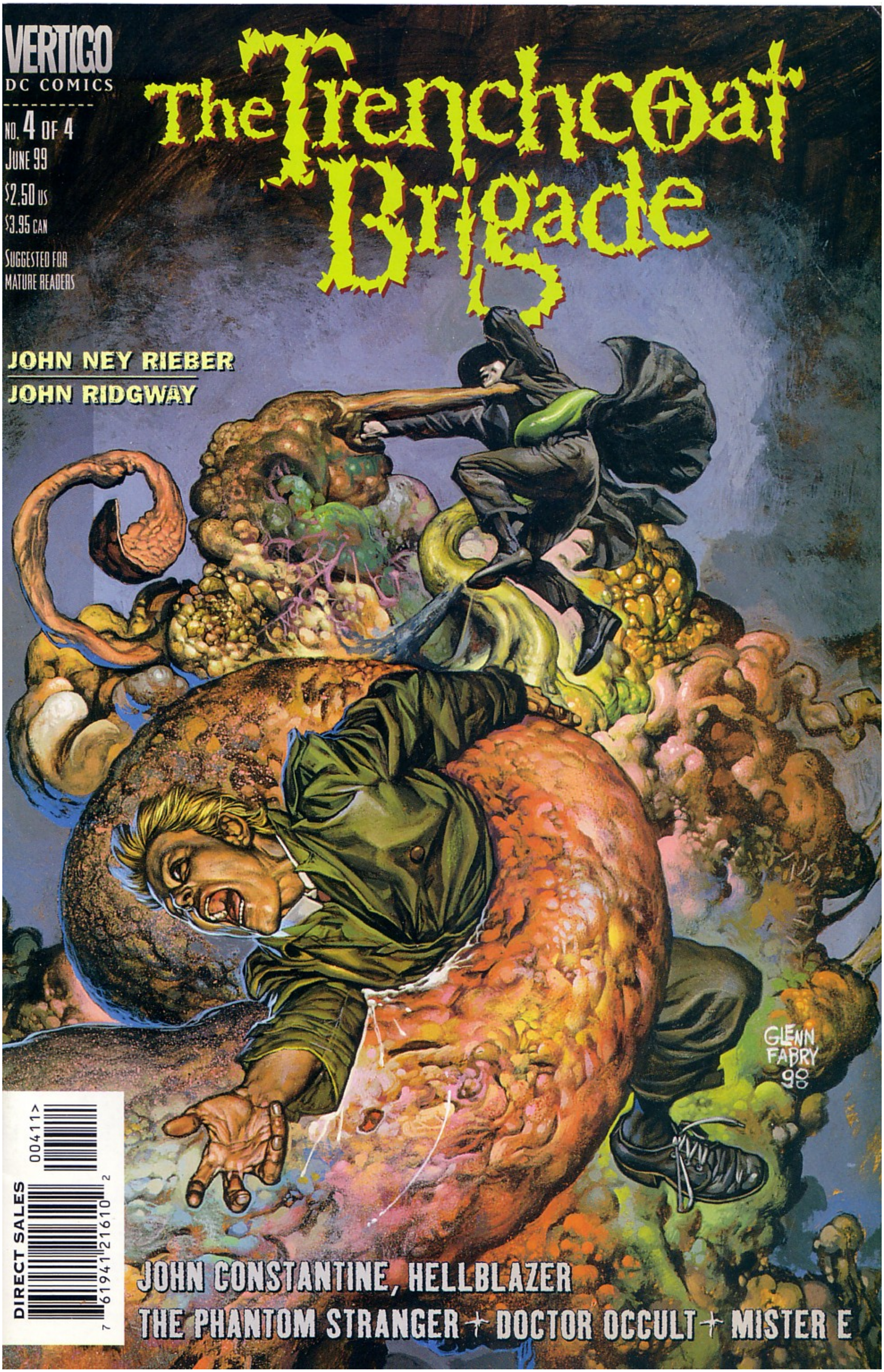

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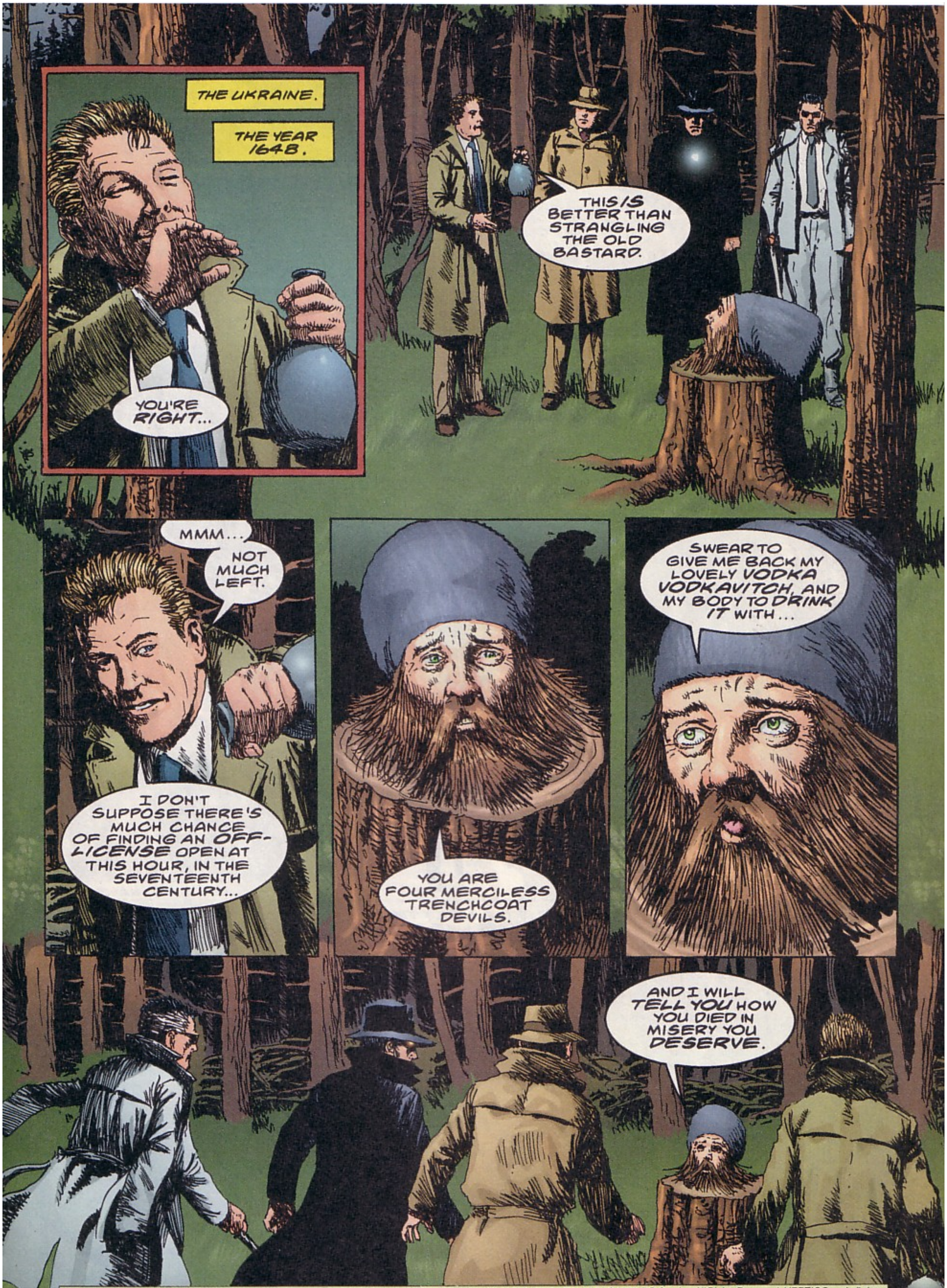
THE UKRAINE.
THE YEAR 1648.
YOU'RE *RIGHT*...
THIS *IS* BETTER THAN STRANGLING THE OLD BASTARD.
MMM... NOT MUCH LEFT.
I DON'T SUPPOSE THERE'S MUCH CHANCE OF FINDING AN *OFF-LICENSE* OPEN AT THIS HOUR, IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY...
YOU ARE FOUR MERCILESS TRENCHCOAT DEVILS.
SWEAR TO GIVE ME BACK MY LOVELY *VODKA VODKAVITCH*, AND MY BODY TO *DRINK IT* WITH...
AND I WILL *TELL YOU* HOW YOU DIED IN MISERY YOU *DESERVE*.

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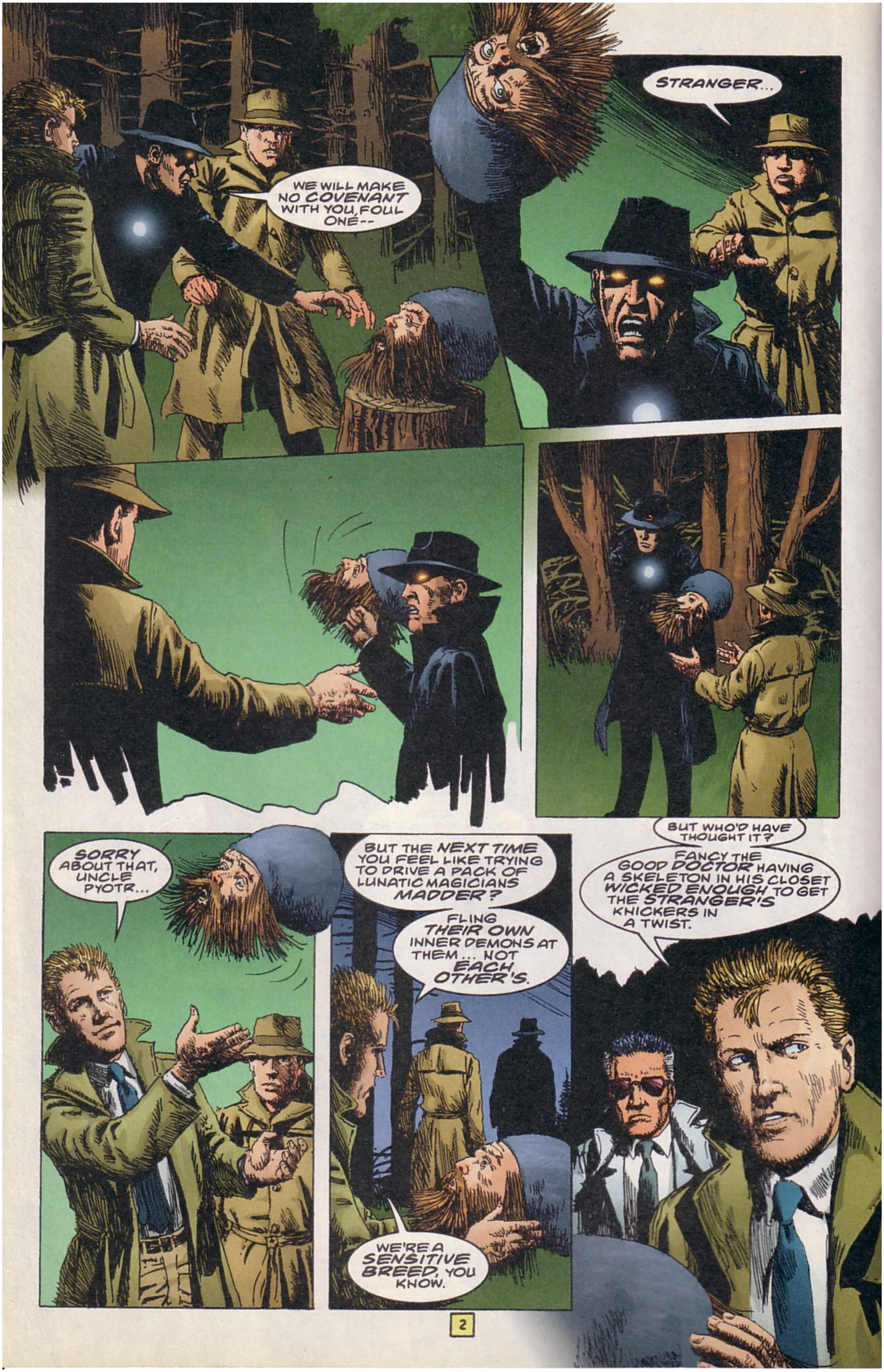
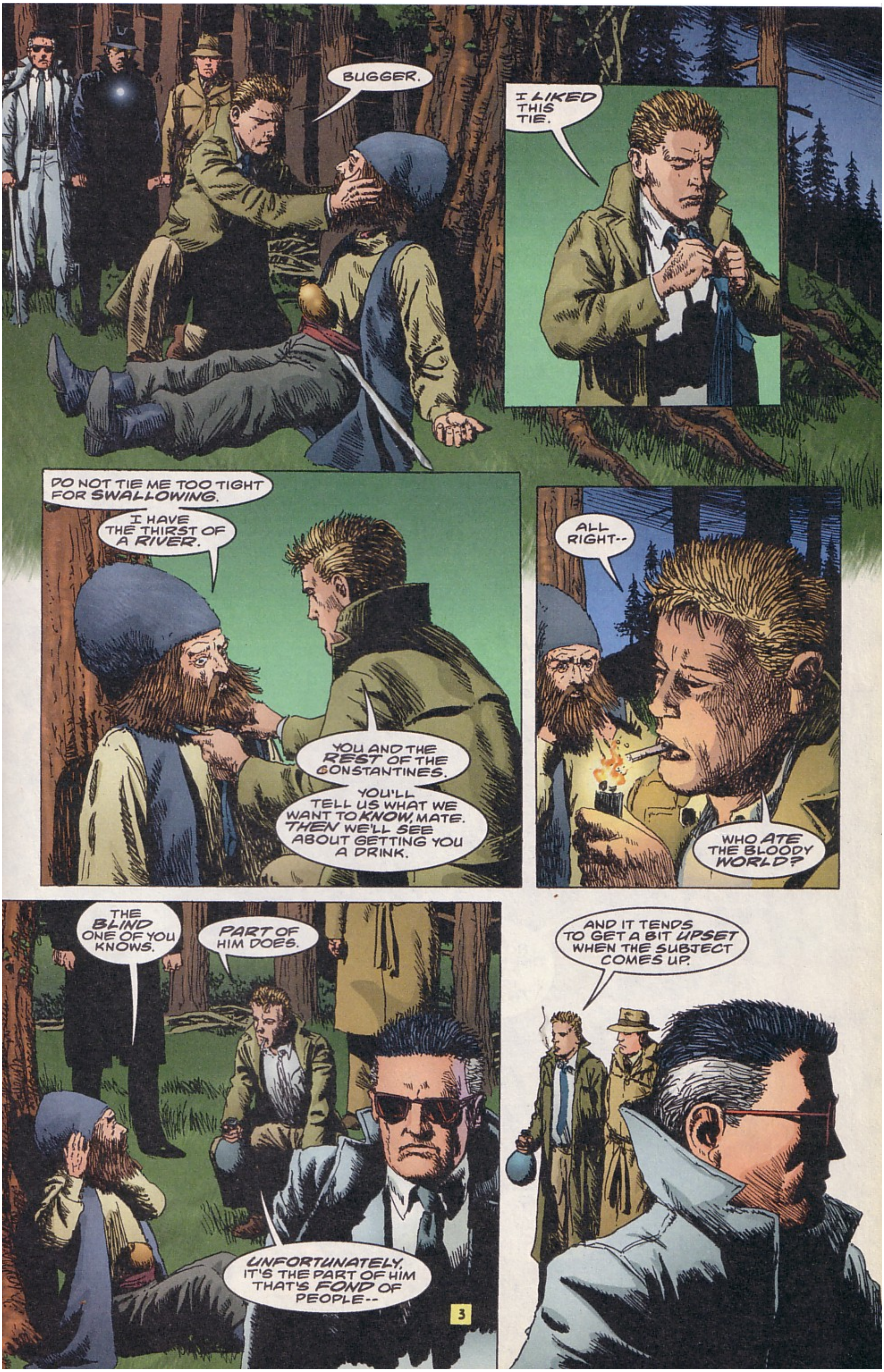
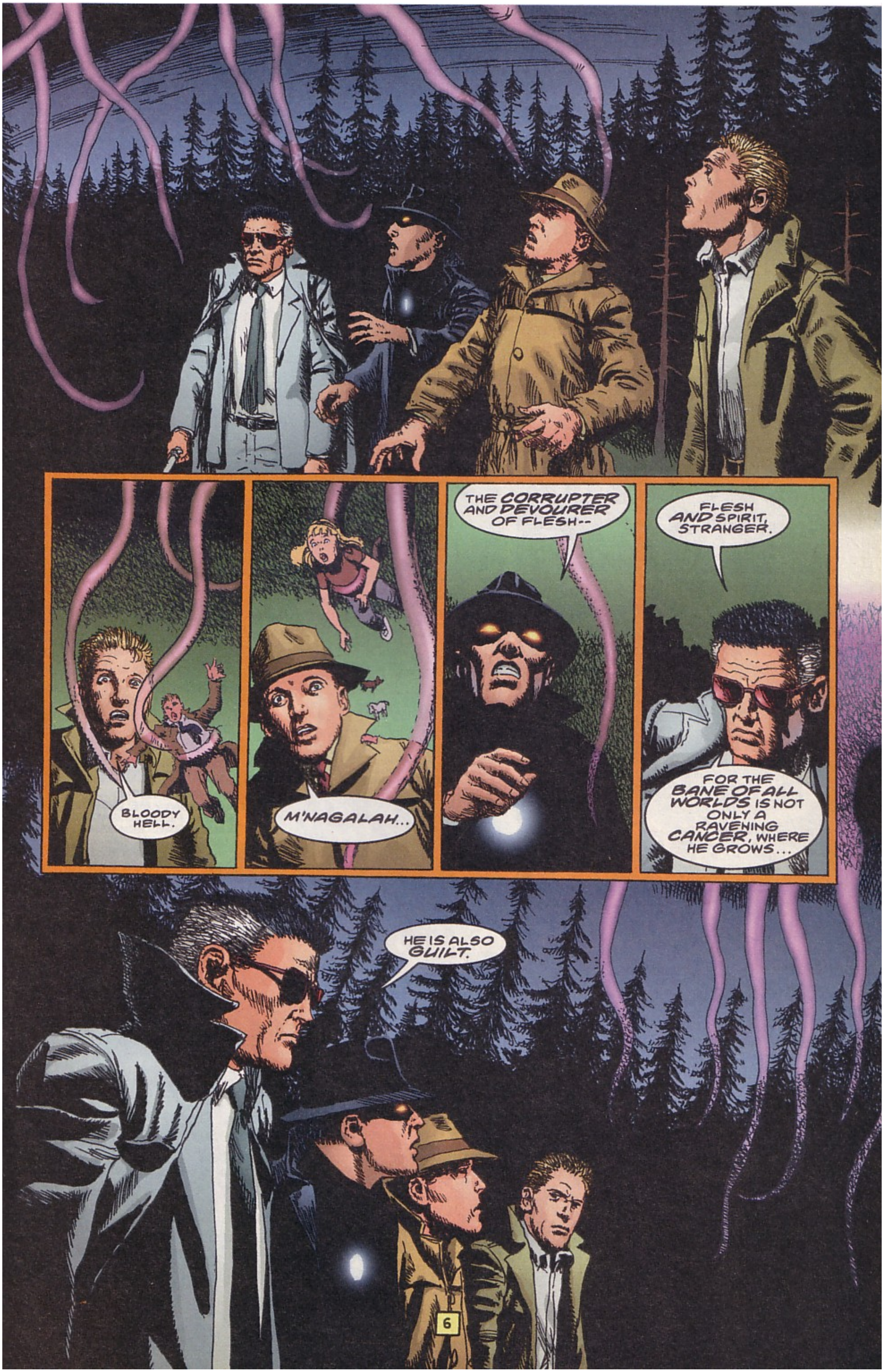
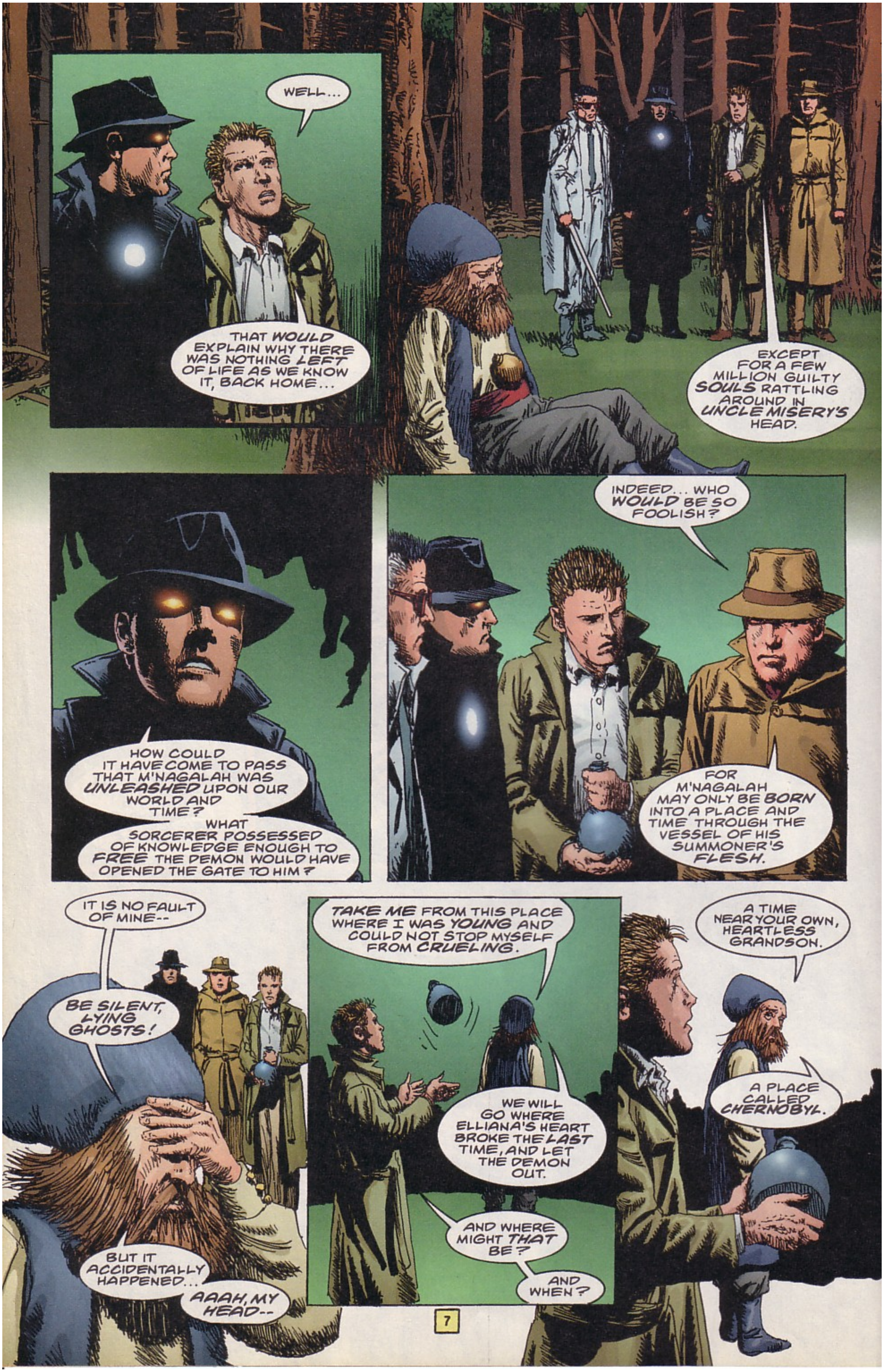
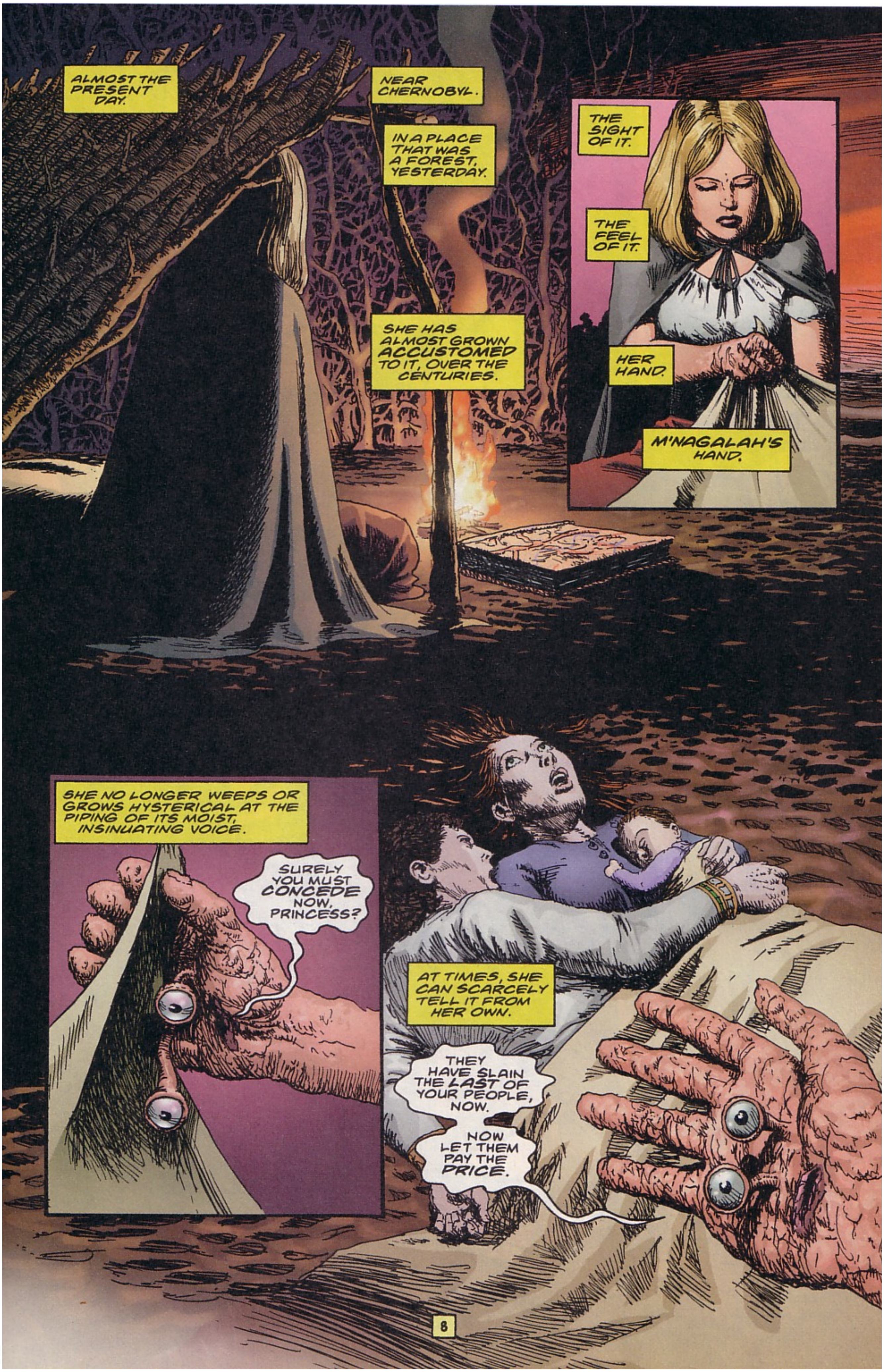
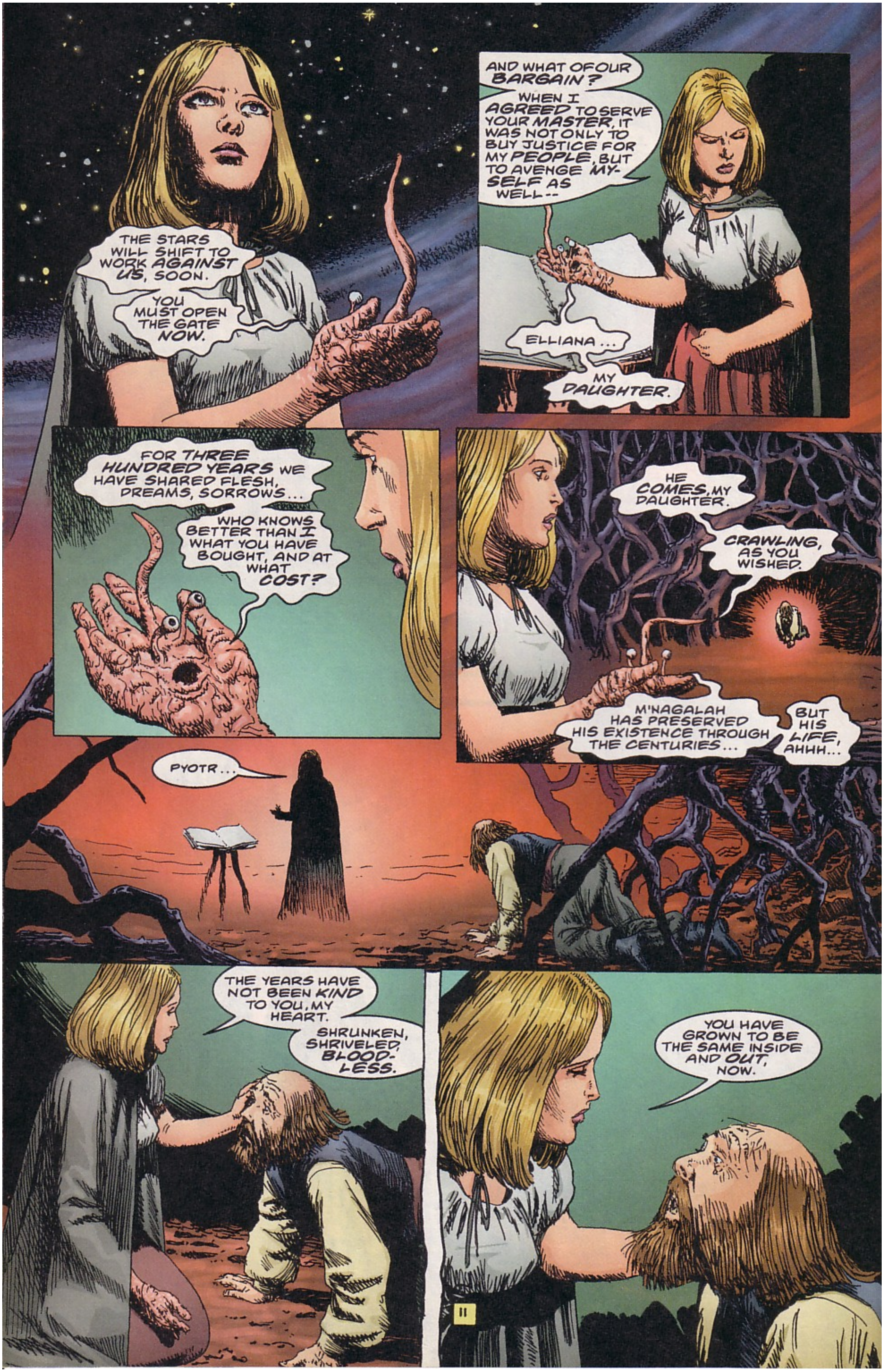

WE WILL MAKE NO COVENANT WITH YOU, FOUL ONE--
STRANGER...
SORRY ABOUT THAT, UNCLE PYOTR...
BUT THE NEXT TIME YOU FEEL LIKE TRYING TO DRIVE A PACK OF LUNATIC MAGICIANS MADDER?
FLING THEIR OWN INNER DEMONS AT THEM... NOT EACH OTHER'S.
WE'RE A SENSITIVE BREED, YOU KNOW.
BUT WHO'D HAVE THOUGHT IT?
FANCY THE GOOD DOCTOR HAVING A SKELETON IN HIS CLOSET WICKED ENOUGH TO GET THE STRANGER'S KNICKERS IN A TWIST.

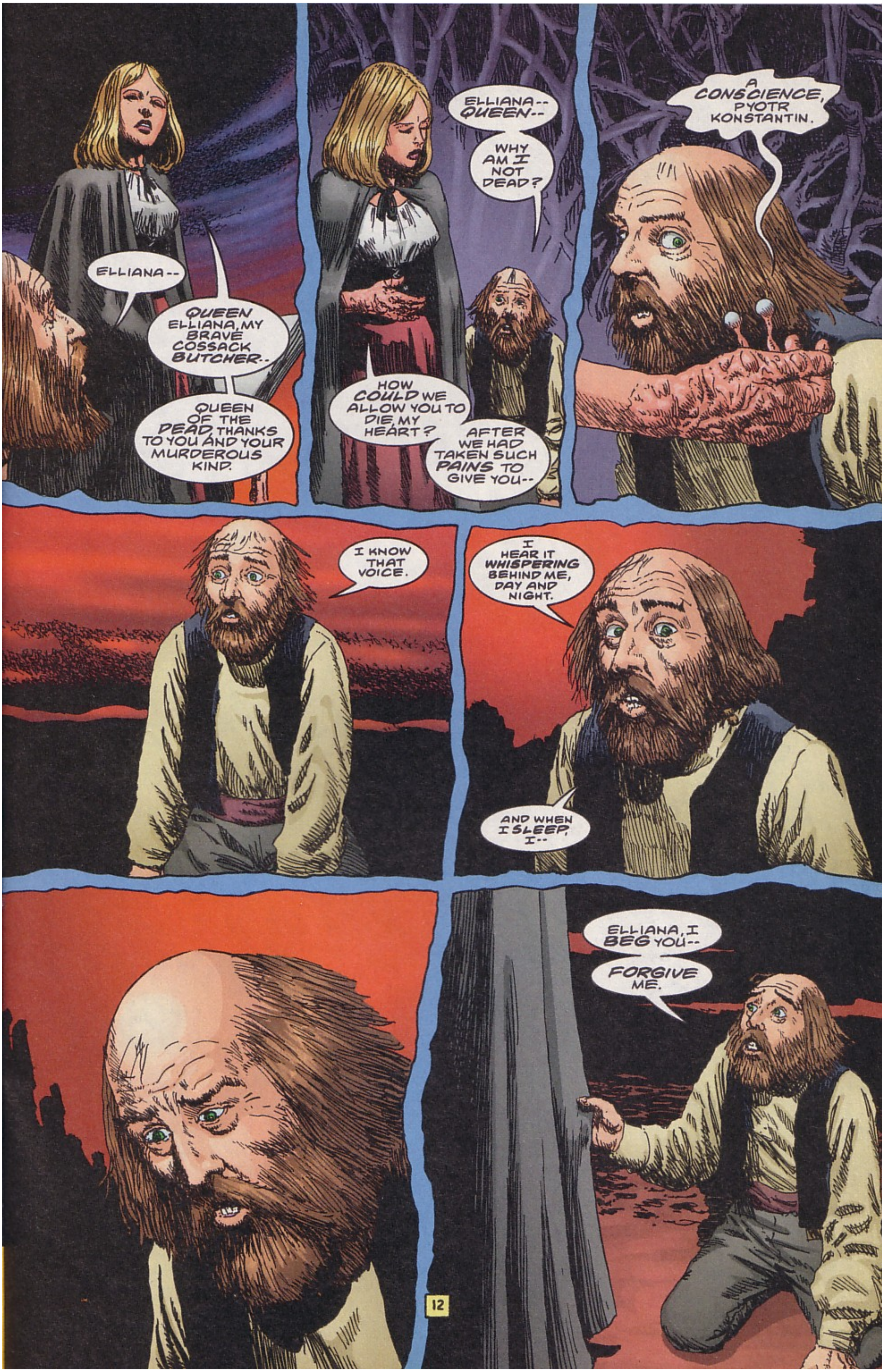

BUGGER.
I LIKED THIS TIE.
DO NOT TIE ME TOO TIGHT FOR SWALLOWING.
I HAVE THE THIRST OF A RIVER.
YOU AND THE REST OF THE CONSTANTINES.
YOU'LL TELL US WHAT WE WANT TO KNOW, MATE. THEN WE'LL SEE ABOUT GETTING YOU A DRINK.
ALL RIGHT--
WHO ATE THE BLOODY WORLD?
THE BLIND ONE OF YOU KNOWS.
PART OF HIM DOES.
UNFORTUNATELY, IT'S THE PART OF HIM THAT'S FOND OF PEOPLE--
AND IT TENDS TO GET A BIT UPSET WHEN THE SUBJECT COMES UP.

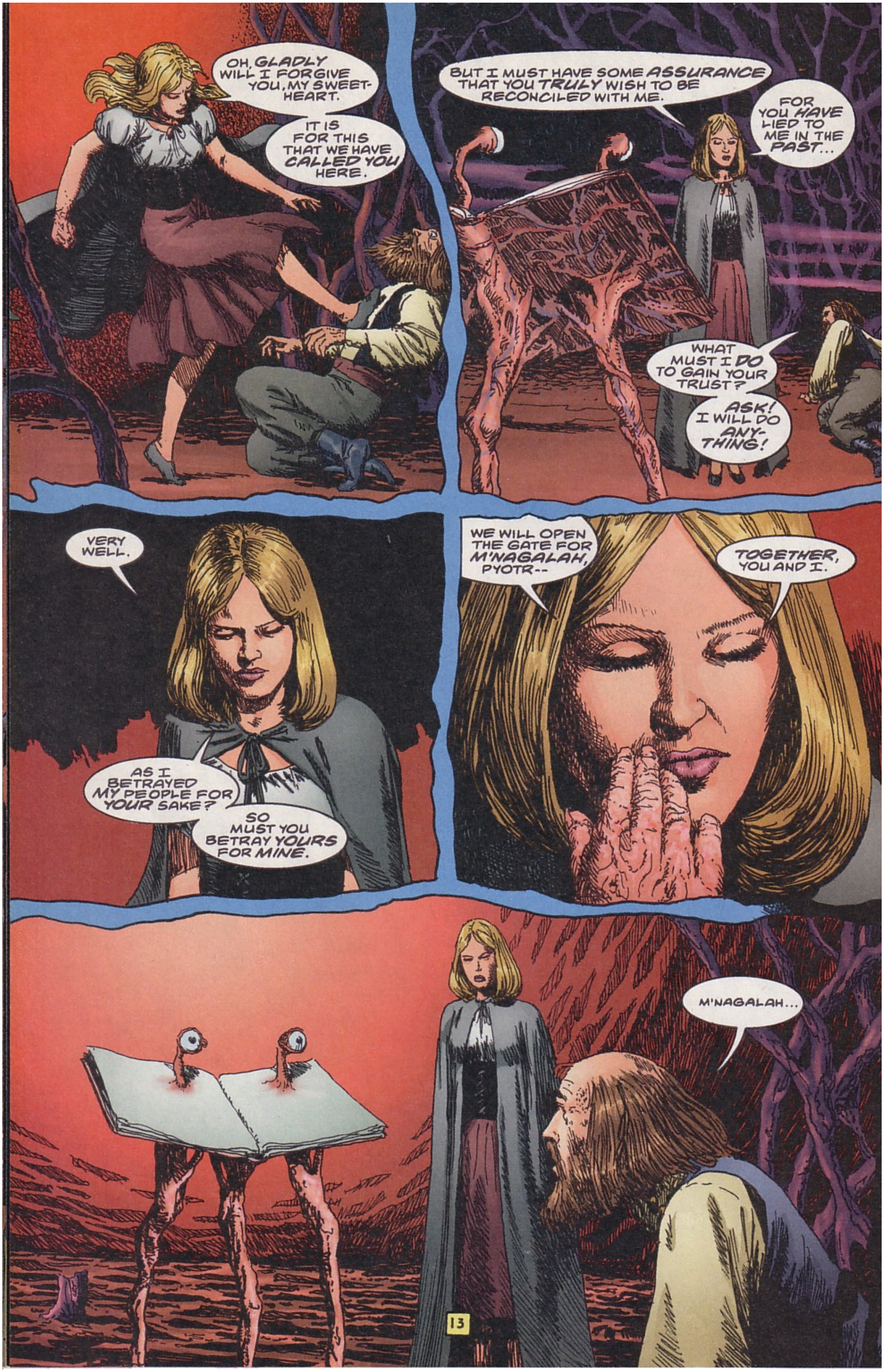

BLOODY HELL.
M'NAGALAH...
THE CORRUPTER AND DEVOURER OF FLESH--
FLESH AND SPIRIT, STRANGER.
FOR THE BANE OF ALL WORLDS IS NOT ONLY A RAVENING CANCER, WHERE HE GROWS...
HE IS ALSO GUILT.

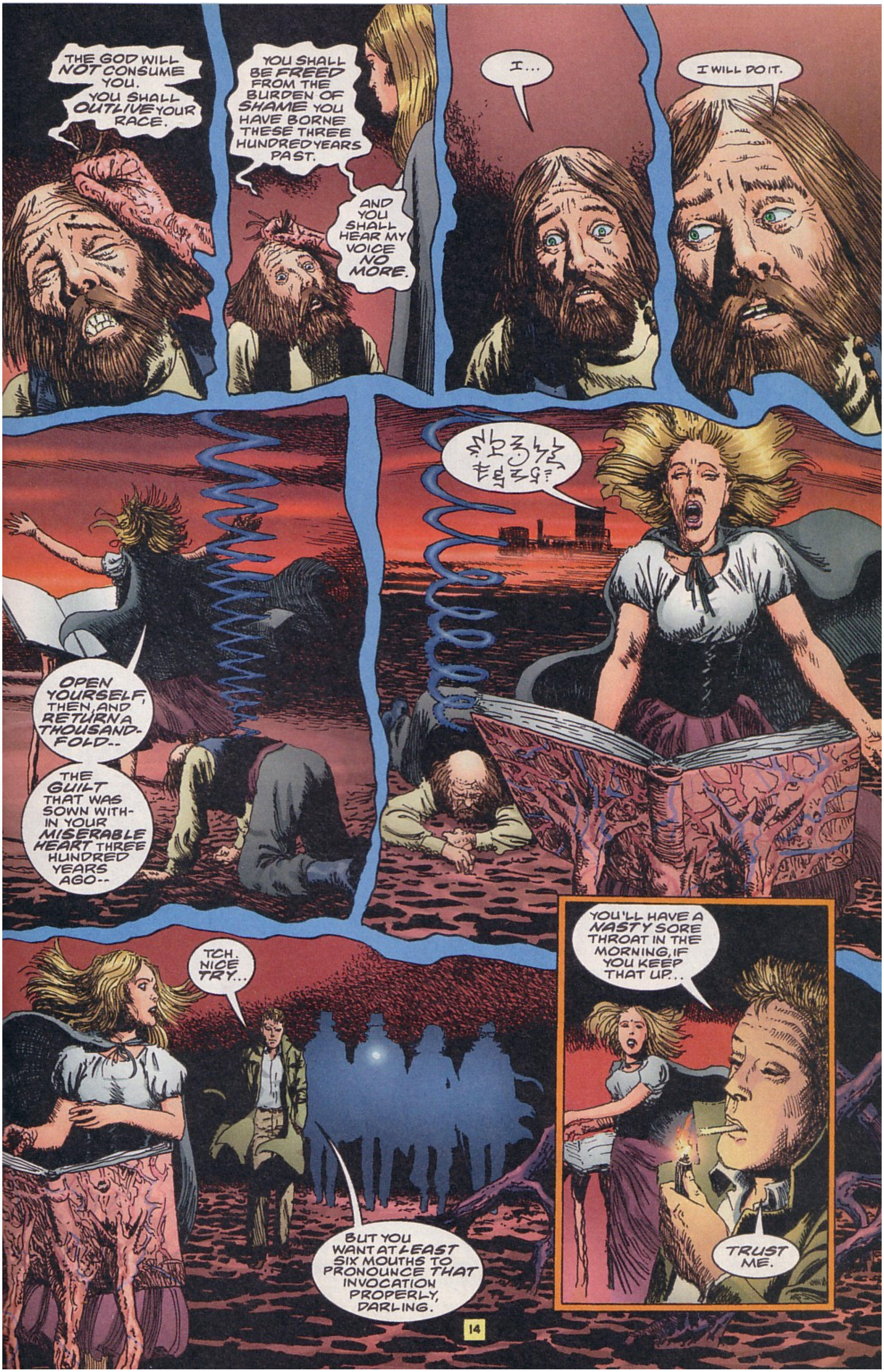

WELL...
THAT *WOULD* EXPLAIN WHY THERE WAS NOTHING *LEFT* OF LIFE AS WE KNOW IT, BACK HOME...
EXCEPT FOR A FEW MILLION GUILTY *SOULS* RATTLING AROUND IN *UNCLE MISERY'S* HEAD.
HOW COULD IT HAVE COME TO PASS THAT M'NAGALAH WAS *UNLEASHED* UPON OUR WORLD AND TIME?
WHAT SORCERER POSSESSED OF KNOWLEDGE ENOUGH TO *FREE* THE DEMON WOULD HAVE OPENED THE GATE TO HIM?
INDEED... WHO *WOULD* BE SO FOOLISH?
FOR M'NAGALAH MAY ONLY BE *BORN* INTO A PLACE AND TIME THROUGH THE VESSEL OF HIS SUMMONER'S *FLESH*.
IT IS NO FAULT OF MINE--
BE SILENT, LYING GHOSTS!
BUT IT ACCIDENTALLY HAPPENED...
AAAH, MY HEAD--
TAKE ME FROM THIS PLACE WHERE I WAS *YOUNG* AND COULD NOT STOP MYSELF FROM *CRUELING*.
WE WILL GO WHERE ELLIANA'S HEART BROKE THE *LAST* TIME, AND LET THE DEMON OUT.
AND WHERE MIGHT *THAT* BE?
AND WHEN?
A TIME NEAR YOUR OWN, HEARTLESS GRANDSON.
A PLACE CALLED *CHERNOBYL*.

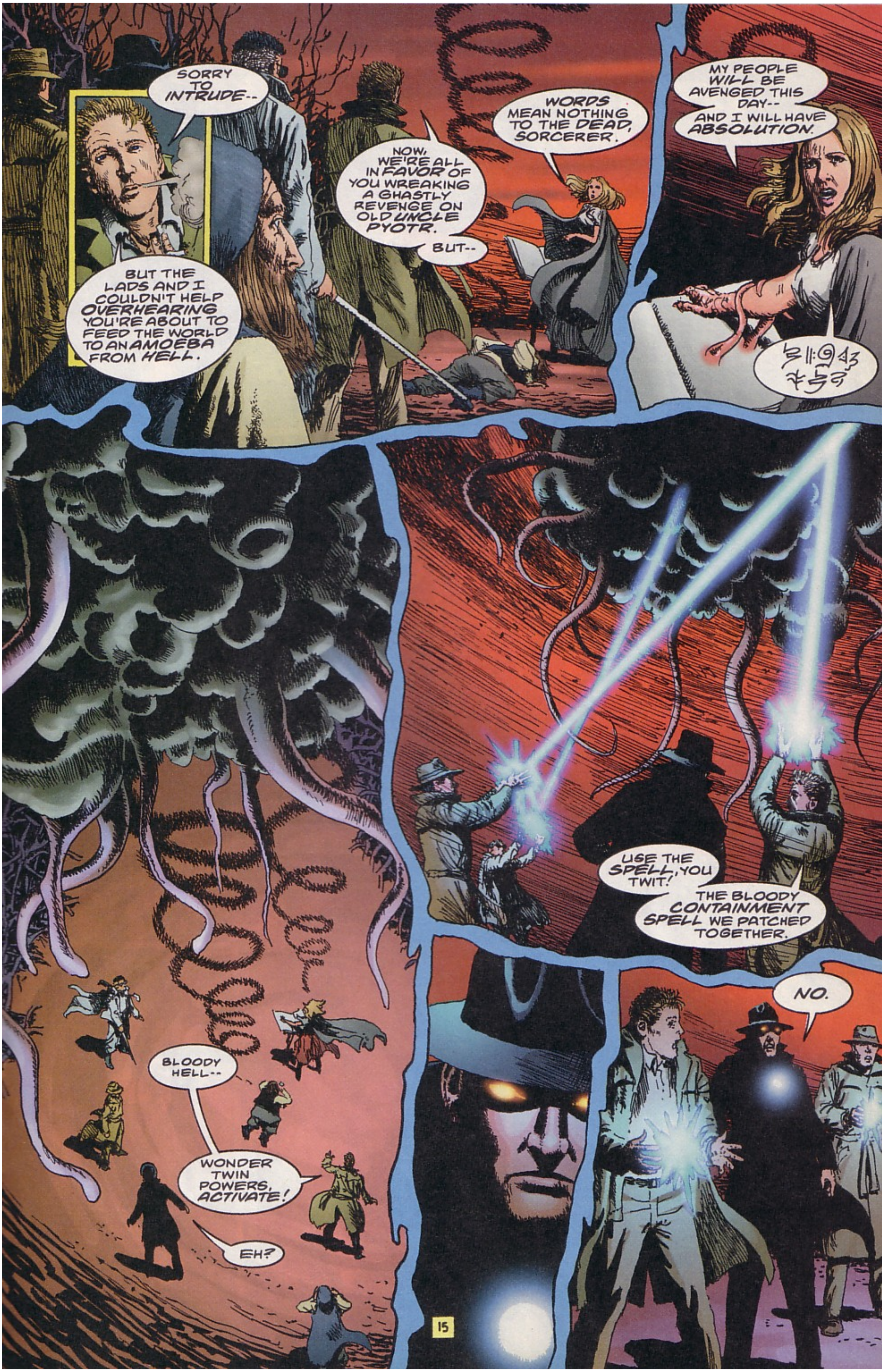

ALMOST THE PRESENT DAY.
NEAR CHERNOBYL.
IN A PLACE THAT WAS A FOREST, YESTERDAY.
SHE HAS ALMOST GROWN ACCUSTOMED TO IT, OVER THE CENTURIES.
THE SIGHT OF IT.
THE FEEL OF IT.
HER HAND.
M'NAGALAH'S HAND.
SHE NO LONGER WEEPS OR GROWS HYSTERICAL AT THE PIPING OF ITS MOIST, INSINUATING VOICE.
SURELY YOU MUST CONCEDE NOW, PRINCESS?
AT TIMES, SHE CAN SCARCELY TELL IT FROM HER OWN.
THEY HAVE SLAIN THE LAST OF YOUR PEOPLE, NOW.
NOW LET THEM PAY THE PRICE.

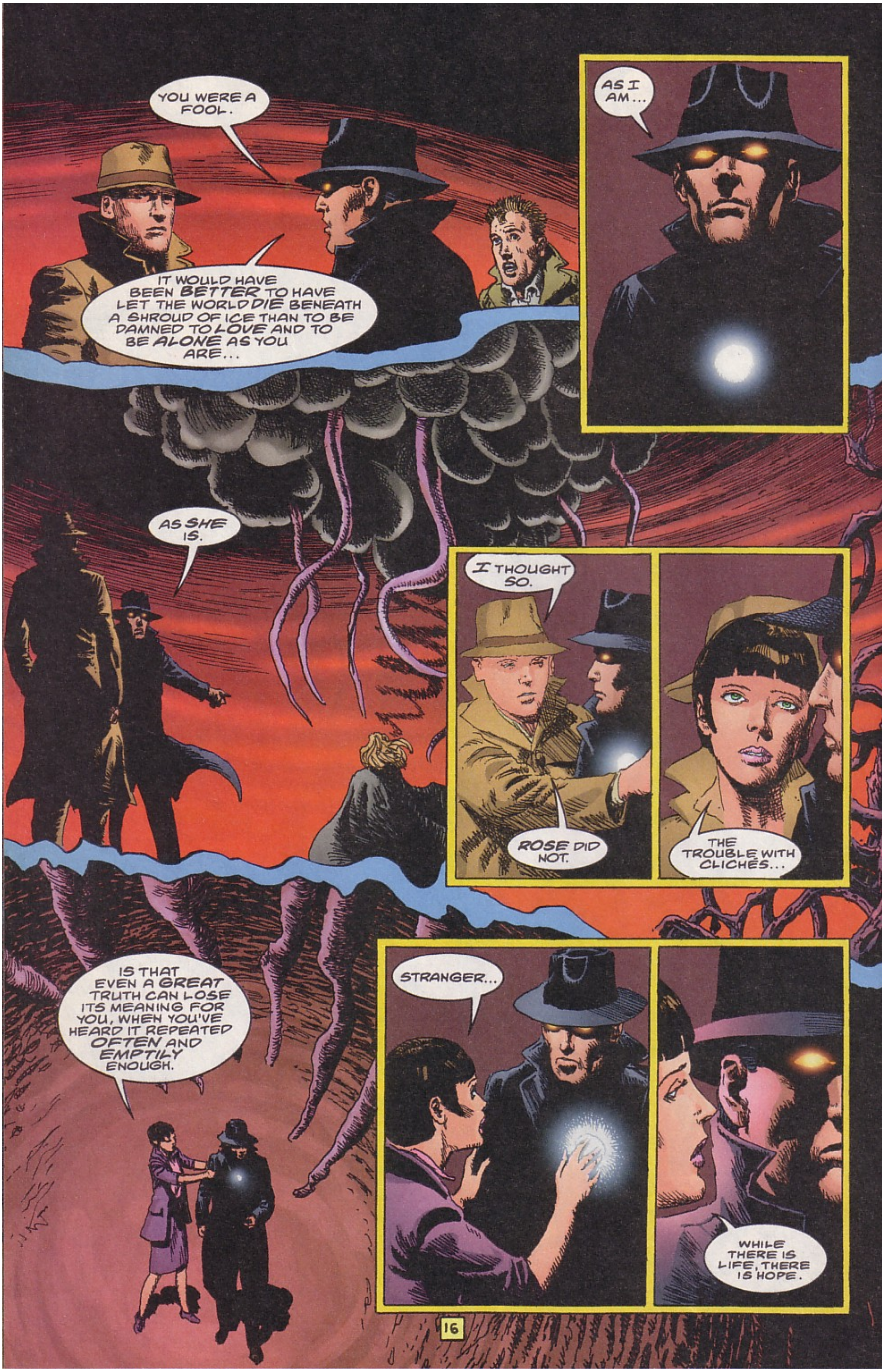

THE STARS WILL SHIFT TO WORK AGAINST US, SOON.
YOU MUST OPEN THE GATE NOW.
AND WHAT OF OUR BARGAIN?
WHEN I AGREED TO SERVE YOUR MASTER, IT WAS NOT ONLY TO BUY JUSTICE FOR MY PEOPLE, BUT TO AVENGE MYSELF AS WELL--
ELLIANA...
MY DAUGHTER.
FOR THREE HUNDRED YEARS WE HAVE SHARED FLESH, DREAMS, SORROWS...
WHO KNOWS BETTER THAN I WHAT YOU HAVE BOUGHT, AND AT WHAT COST?
HE COMES, MY DAUGHTER.
CRAWLING, AS YOU WISHED.
M'NAGALAH HAS PRESERVED HIS EXISTENCE THROUGH THE CENTURIES...
BUT HIS LIFE, AHHH...
PYOTR...
THE YEARS HAVE NOT BEEN KIND TO YOU, MY HEART.
SHRUNKEN, SHRIVELED, BLOODLESS.
YOU HAVE GROWN TO BE THE SAME INSIDE AND OUT, NOW.

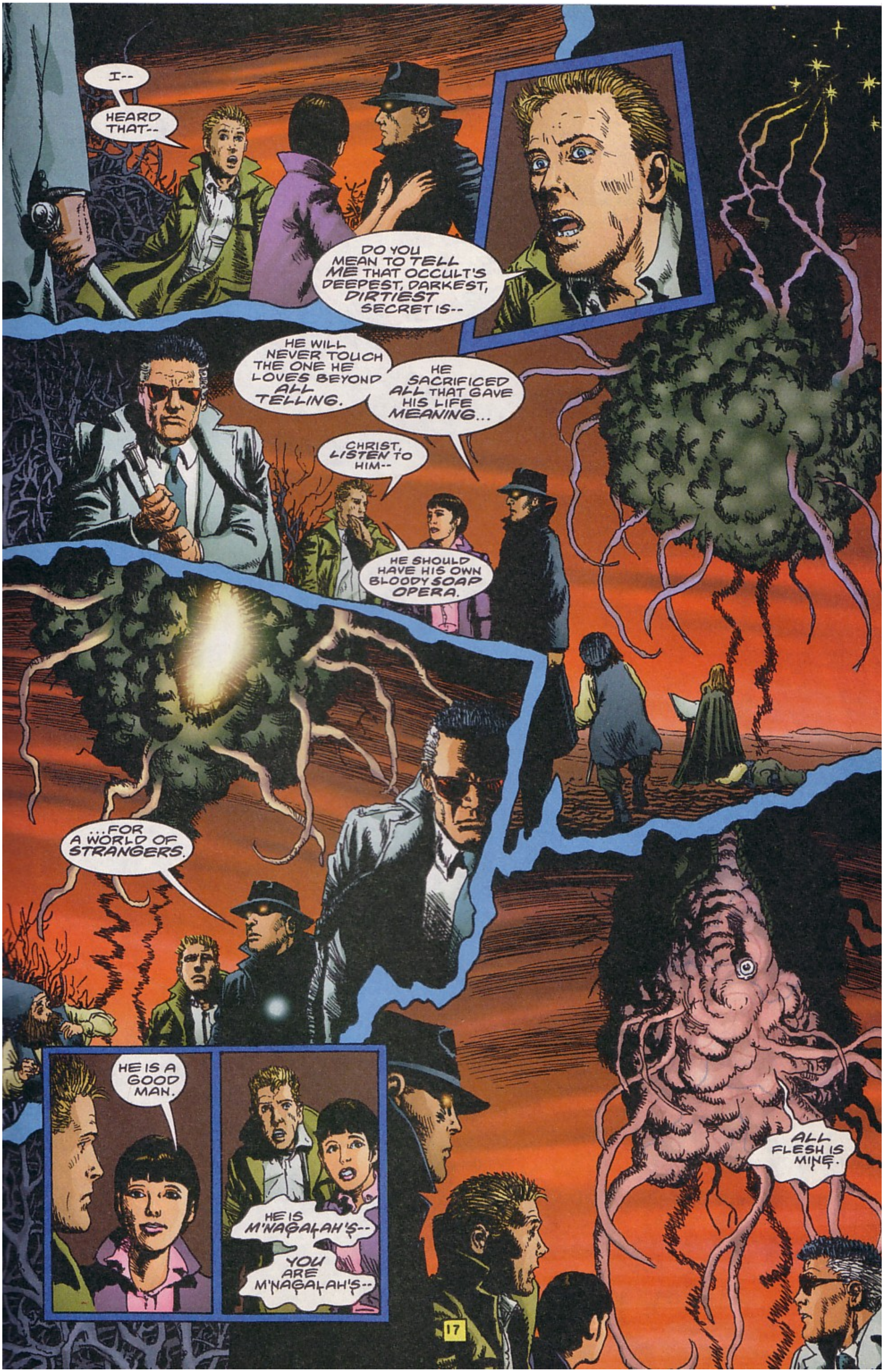

ELLIANA--
QUEEN ELLIANA, MY BRAVE COSSACK BUTCHER--
QUEEN OF THE DEAD, THANKS TO YOU AND YOUR MURDEROUS KIND.
ELLIANA-- QUEEN--
WHY AM I NOT DEAD?
HOW COULD WE ALLOW YOU TO DIE, MY HEART?
AFTER WE HAD TAKEN SUCH PAINS TO GIVE YOU--
A CONSCIENCE, PYOTR KONSTANTIN.
I KNOW THAT VOICE.
I HEAR IT WHISPERING BEHIND ME, DAY AND NIGHT.
AND WHEN I SLEEP, I--
ELLIANA, I BEG YOU--
FORGIVE ME.

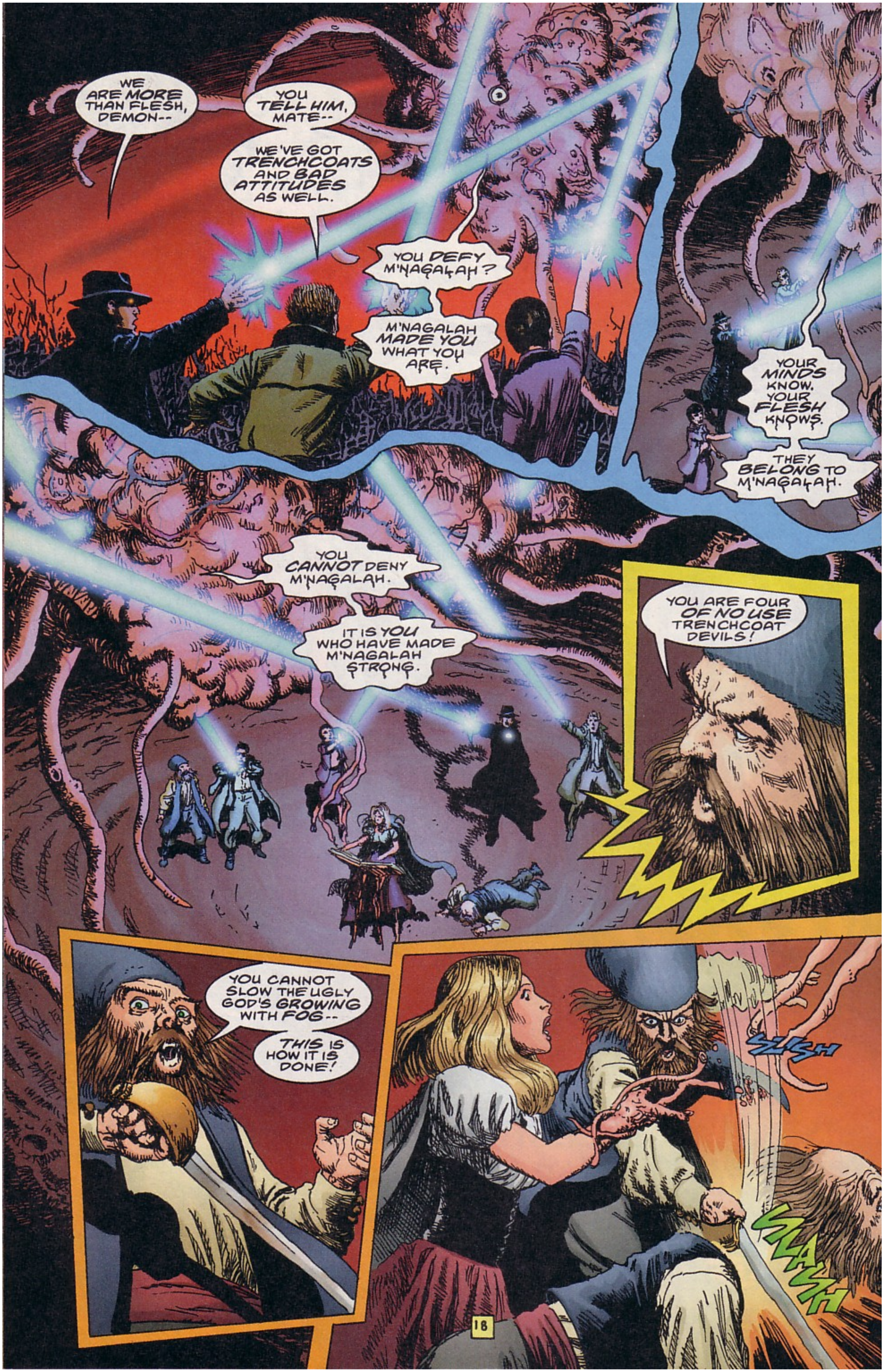

OH, GLADLY WILL I FORGIVE YOU, MY SWEETHEART.
IT IS FOR THIS THAT WE HAVE CALLED YOU HERE.
BUT I MUST HAVE SOME ASSURANCE THAT YOU TRULY WISH TO BE RECONCILED WITH ME.
FOR YOU HAVE LIED TO ME IN THE PAST...
WHAT MUST I DO TO GAIN YOUR TRUST?
ASK! I WILL DO ANYTHING!
VERY WELL.
AS I BETRAYED MY PEOPLE FOR YOUR SAKE?
SO MUST YOU BETRAY YOURS FOR MINE.
WE WILL OPEN THE GATE FOR M'NAGALAH, PYOTR--
TOGETHER, YOU AND I.
M'NAGALAH...

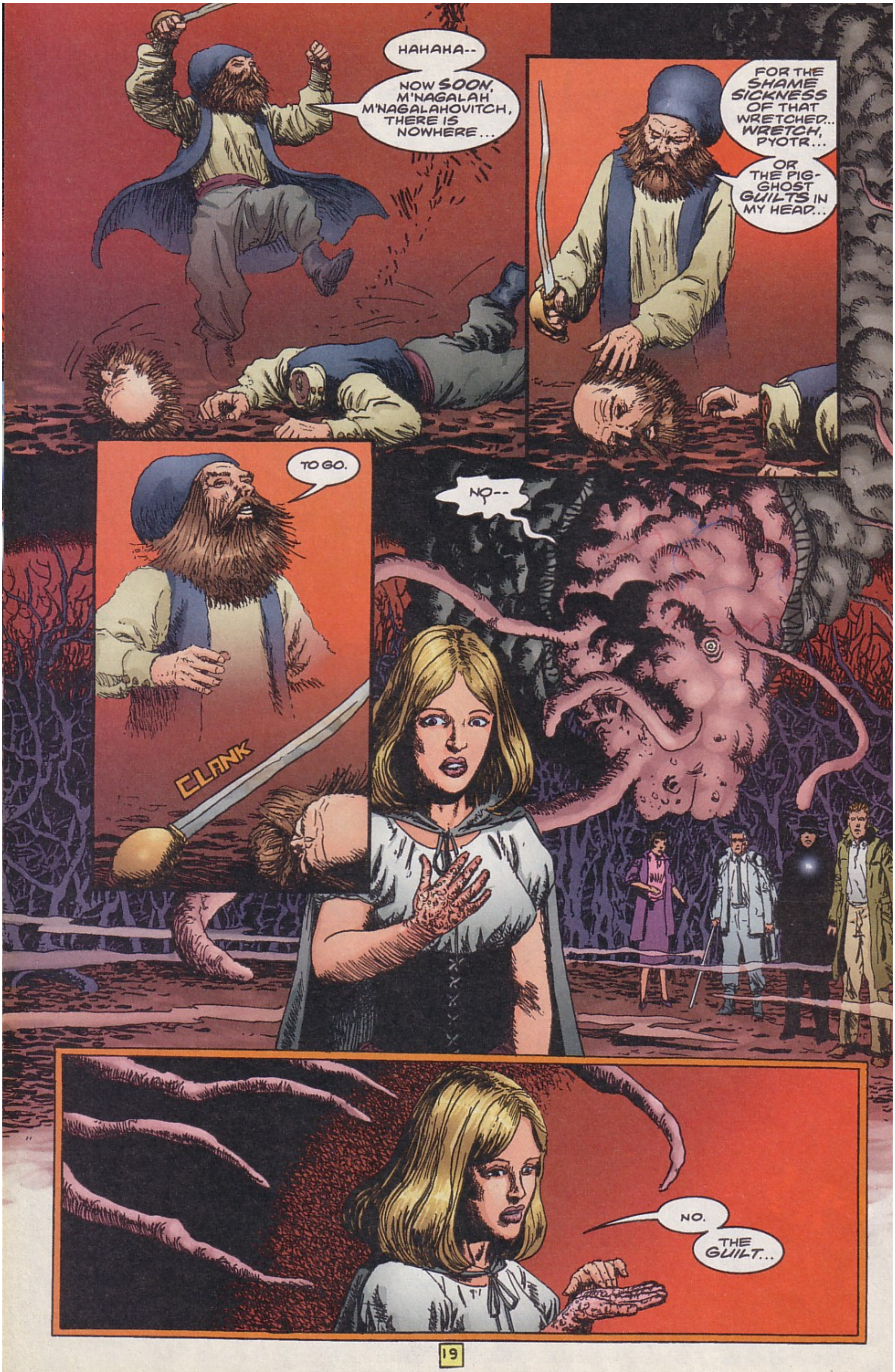

THE GOD WILL *NOT* CONSUME YOU. YOU SHALL *OUTLIVE* YOUR RACE.
YOU SHALL BE *FREED* FROM THE BURDEN OF *SHAME* YOU HAVE BORNE THESE THREE HUNDRED YEARS PAST.
AND YOU SHALL HEAR MY VOICE *NO MORE.*
I...
I WILL DO IT.
OPEN YOURSELF, THEN, AND *RETURN* A *THOUSAND-FOLD*--
THE *GUILT* THAT WAS SOWN WITHIN YOUR *MISERABLE HEART* THREE HUNDRED YEARS AGO--
TCH. NICE *TRY*...
BUT YOU WANT AT *LEAST* SIX MOUTHS TO PRONOUNCE *THAT* INVOCATION PROPERLY, DARLING.
YOU'LL HAVE A *NASTY* SORE THROAT IN THE MORNING, IF YOU KEEP THAT UP...
TRUST ME.

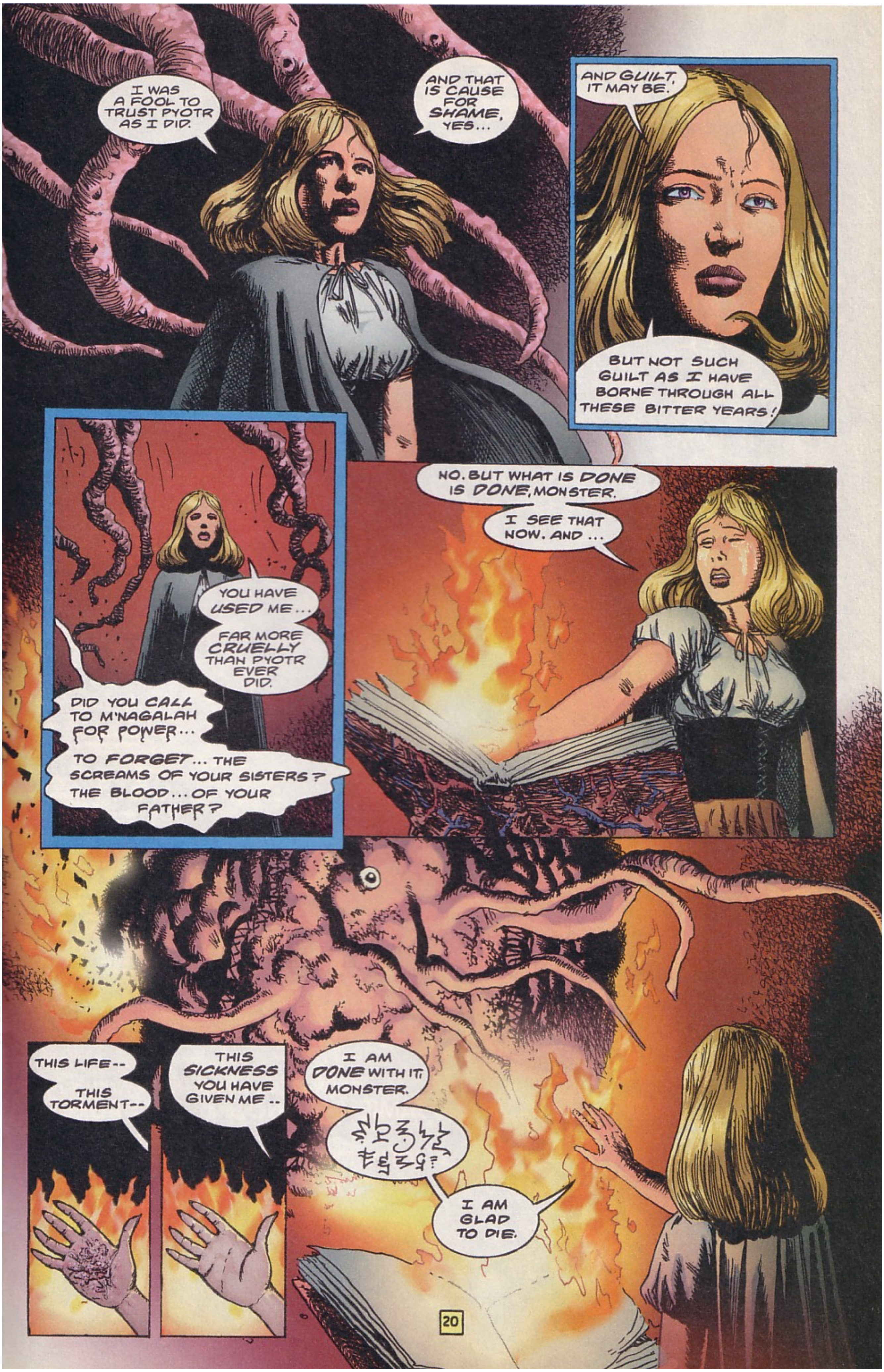

SORRY TO *INTRUDE*--
NOW, WE'RE ALL IN *FAVOR* OF YOU WREAKING A GHASTLY REVENGE ON OLD *UNCLE PYOTR*.
BUT--
BUT THE LADS AND I COULDN'T HELP *OVERHEARING* YOU'RE ABOUT TO FEED THE WORLD TO AN *AMOEBA* FROM *HELL*.
WORDS MEAN NOTHING TO THE *DEAD*, SORCERER.
MY PEOPLE *WILL* BE AVENGED THIS DAY-- AND I WILL HAVE *ABSOLUTION*.
BLOODY HELL--
WONDER TWIN POWERS, *ACTIVATE*!
EH?
USE THE *SPELL*, YOU TWIT!
THE BLOODY *CONTAINMENT SPELL* WE PATCHED TOGETHER.
NO.
15

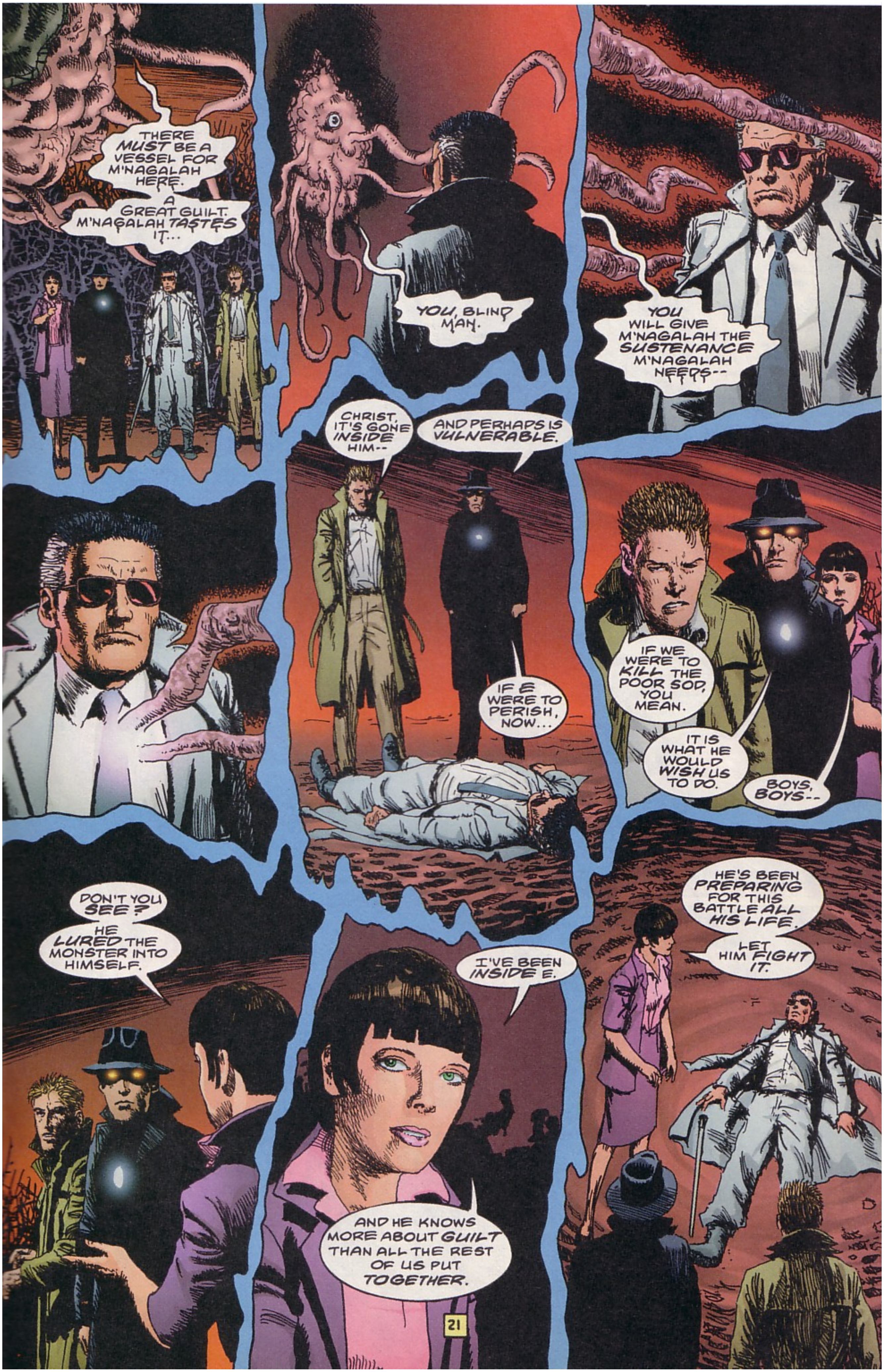

YOU WERE A FOOL.
IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER TO HAVE LET THE WORLD DIE BENEATH A SHROUD OF ICE THAN TO BE DAMNED TO LOVE AND TO BE ALONE AS YOU ARE...
AS I AM...
AS SHE IS.
I THOUGHT SO.
ROSE DID NOT.
THE TROUBLE WITH CLICHÉS...
IS THAT EVEN A GREAT TRUTH CAN LOSE ITS MEANING FOR YOU, WHEN YOU'VE HEARD IT REPEATED OFTEN AND EMPTILY ENOUGH.
STRANGER...
WHILE THERE IS LIFE, THERE IS HOPE.


I--
HEARD THAT--
DO YOU MEAN TO TELL ME THAT OCCULT'S DEEPEST, DARKEST, DIRTIEST SECRET IS--
HE WILL NEVER TOUCH THE ONE HE LOVES BEYOND ALL TELLING.
HE SACRIFICED ALL THAT GAVE HIS LIFE MEANING...
CHRIST, LISTEN TO HIM--
HE SHOULD HAVE HIS OWN BLOODY SOAP OPERA.
...FOR A WORLD OF STRANGERS.
ALL FLESH IS MINE.
HE IS A GOOD MAN.
HE IS M'NAGALAH'S--
YOU ARE M'NAGALAH'S--

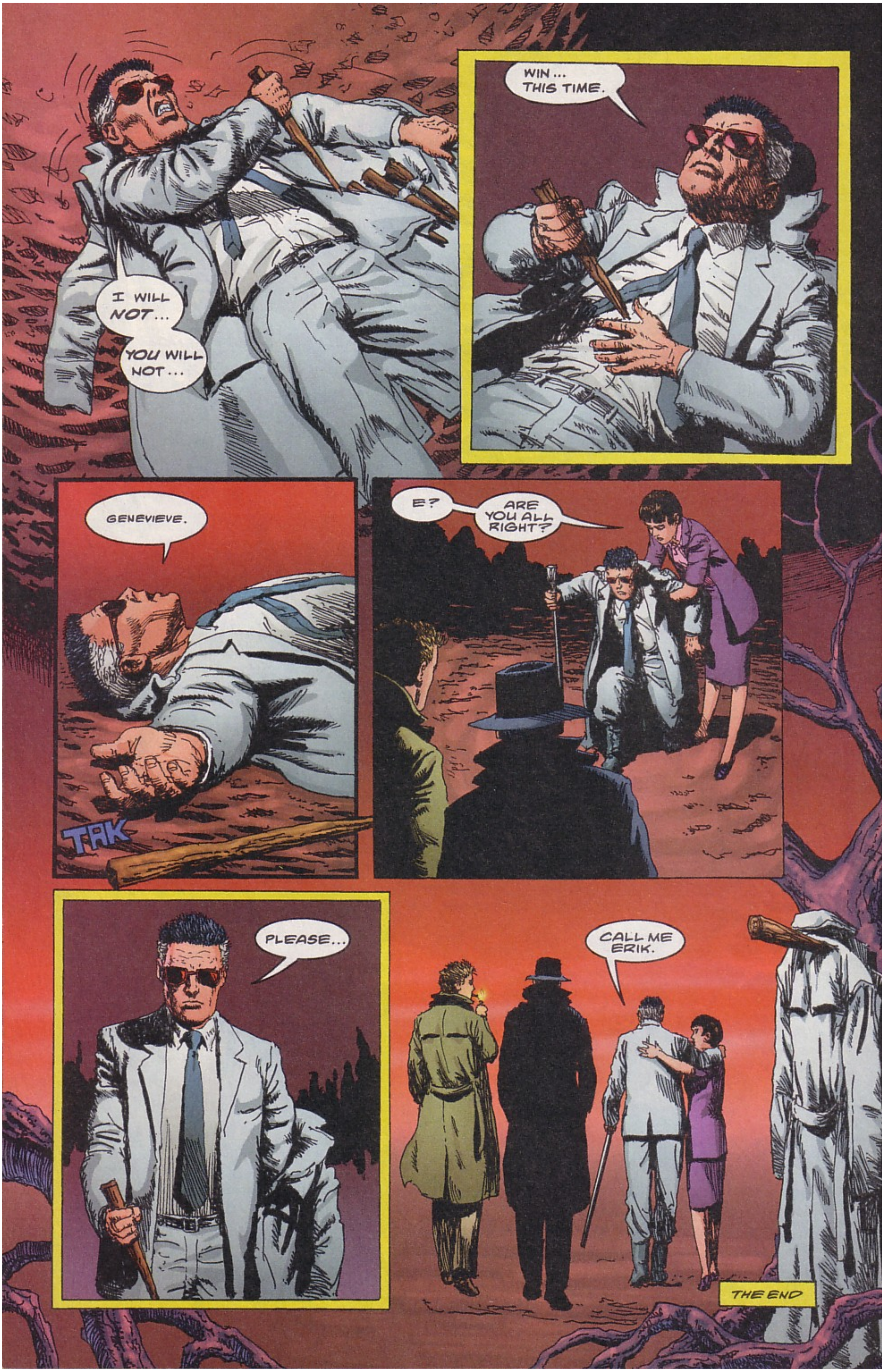

WE ARE MORE THAN FLESH, DEMON--
YOU TELL HIM, MATE--
WE'VE GOT TRENCHCOATS AND BAD ATTITUDES AS WELL.
YOU DEFY M'NAGALAH?
M'NAGALAH MADE YOU WHAT YOU ARE.
YOUR MINDS KNOW. YOUR FLESH KNOWS.
THEY BELONG TO M'NAGALAH.
YOU CANNOT DENY M'NAGALAH.
IT IS YOU WHO HAVE MADE M'NAGALAH STRONG.
YOU ARE FOUR OF NO USE TRENCHCOAT DEVILS!
YOU CANNOT SLOW THE UGLY GOD'S GROWING WITH FOG--
THIS IS HOW IT IS DONE!
SLISH
SLASH

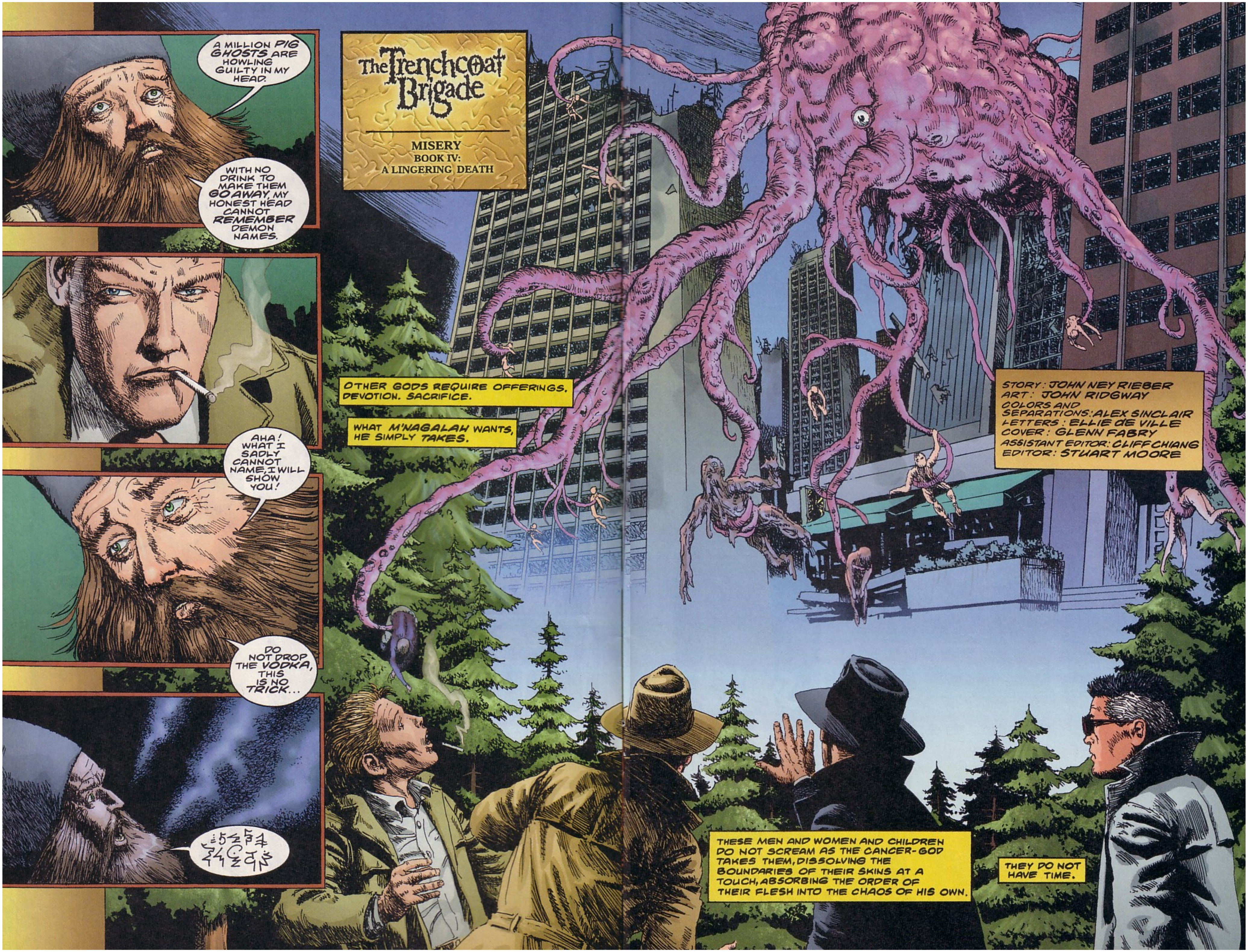

HAHAHA--
NOW SOON, M'NAGALAH M'NAGALAHOVITCH, THERE IS NOWHERE...
FOR THE SHAME SICKNESS OF THAT WRETCHED... WRETCH, PYOTR...
OR THE PIG-GHOST GUILTS IN MY HEAD...
TO GO.
CLANK
NO--
NO.
THE GUILT...

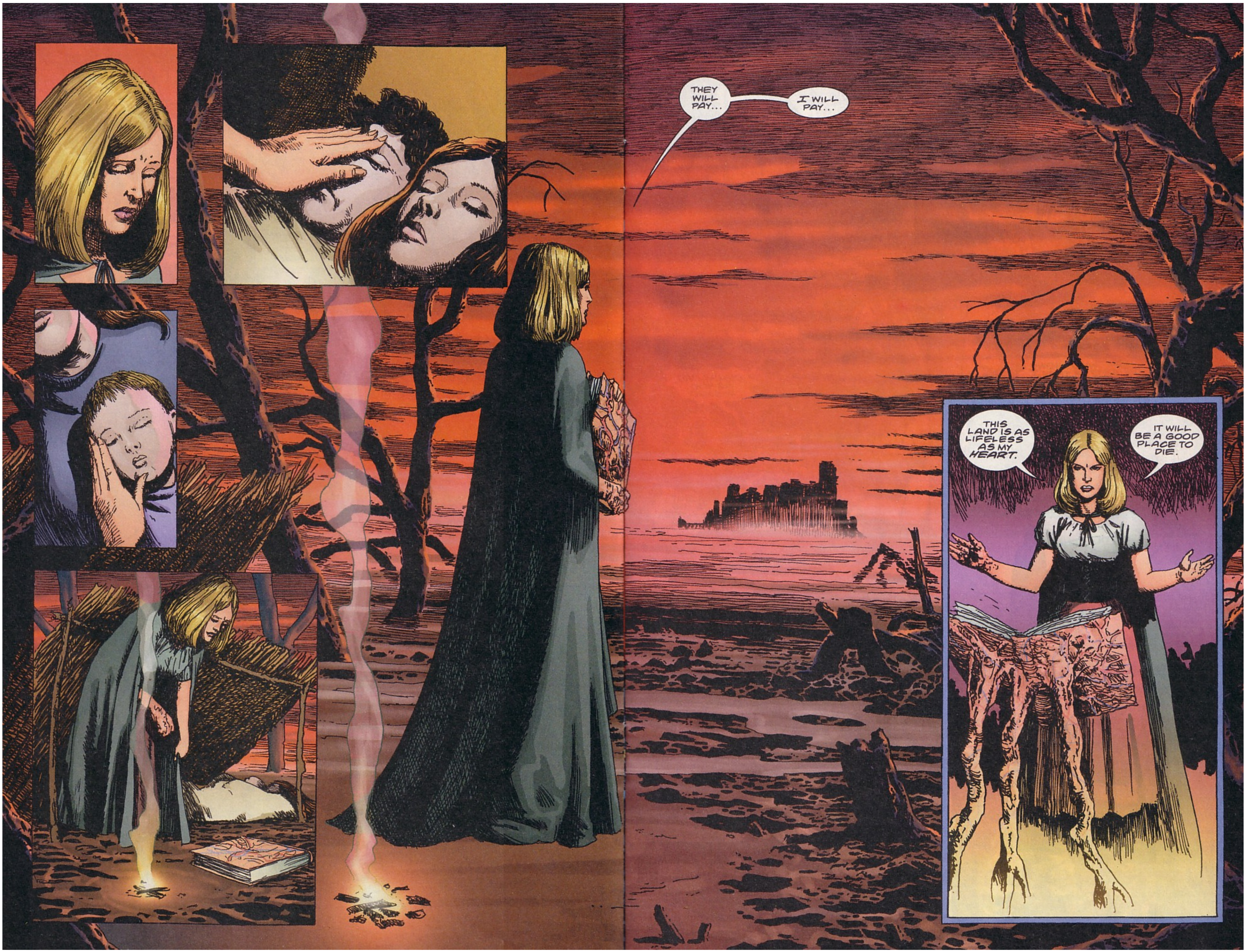

I WAS A FOOL TO TRUST PYOTR AS I DID.
AND THAT IS CAUSE FOR SHAME, YES...
AND GUILT, IT MAY BE.
BUT NOT SUCH GUILT AS I HAVE BORNE THROUGH ALL THESE BITTER YEARS!
YOU HAVE USED ME...
FAR MORE CRUELLY THAN PYOTR EVER DID.
DID YOU CALL TO M'NAGALAH FOR POWER...
TO FORGET... THE SCREAMS OF YOUR SISTERS? THE BLOOD... OF YOUR FATHER?
NO. BUT WHAT IS DONE IS DONE, MONSTER.
I SEE THAT NOW. AND ...
THIS LIFE--
THIS TORMENT--
THIS SICKNESS YOU HAVE GIVEN ME..
I AM DONE WITH IT, MONSTER.
I AM GLAD TO DIE.



THERE MUST BE A VESSEL FOR M'NAGALAH HERE.
A GREAT GUILT. M'NAGALAH TASTES IT...
YOU, BLIND MAN.
YOU WILL GIVE M'NAGALAH THE SUSTENANCE M'NAGALAH NEEDS--
CHRIST, IT'S GONE INSIDE HIM--
AND PERHAPS IS VULNERABLE.
IF E WERE TO PERISH, NOW...
IF WE WERE TO KILL THE POOR SOD, YOU MEAN.
IT IS WHAT HE WOULD WISH US TO DO.
BOYS, BOYS--
DON'T YOU SEE?
HE LURED THE MONSTER INTO HIMSELF.
I'VE BEEN INSIDE E.
AND HE KNOWS MORE ABOUT GUILT THAN ALL THE REST OF US PUT TOGETHER.
HE'S BEEN PREPARING FOR THIS BATTLE ALL HIS LIFE.
LET HIM FIGHT IT.


I WILL *NOT*...
YOU WILL NOT...
WIN... THIS TIME.
GENEVIEVE.
TAK
E?
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
PLEASE...
CALL ME ERIK.
THE END


A MILLION PIG GHOSTS ARE HOWLING GUILTY IN MY HEAD.
WITH NO DRINK TO MAKE THEM GO AWAY, MY HONEST HEAD CANNOT REMEMBER DEMON NAMES.
AHA! WHAT I SADLY CANNOT NAME, I WILL SHOW YOU!
DO NOT DROP THE VODKA, THIS IS NO TRICK...
The Trenchcoat Brigade
MISERY
BOOK IV:
A LINGERING DEATH
OTHER GODS REQUIRE OFFERINGS. DEVOTION. SACRIFICE.
WHAT M'NAGALAH WANTS, HE SIMPLY TAKES.
STORY: JOHN NEY RIEBER
ART: JOHN RIDGWAY
COLORS AND SEPARATIONS: ALEX SINCLAIR
LETTERS: ELLIE DE VILLE
COVER: GLENN FABRY
ASSISTANT EDITOR: CLIFF CHIANG
EDITOR: STUART MOORE
THESE MEN AND WOMEN AND CHILDREN DO NOT SCREAM AS THE CANCER-GOD TAKES THEM, DISSOLVING THE BOUNDARIES OF THEIR SKINS AT A TOUCH, ABSORBING THE ORDER OF THEIR FLESH INTO THE CHAOS OF HIS OWN.
THEY DO NOT HAVE TIME.


THEY WILL PAY...
I WILL PAY...
THIS LAND IS AS LIFELESS AS MY *HEART.*
IT WILL BE A GOOD PLACE TO DIE.